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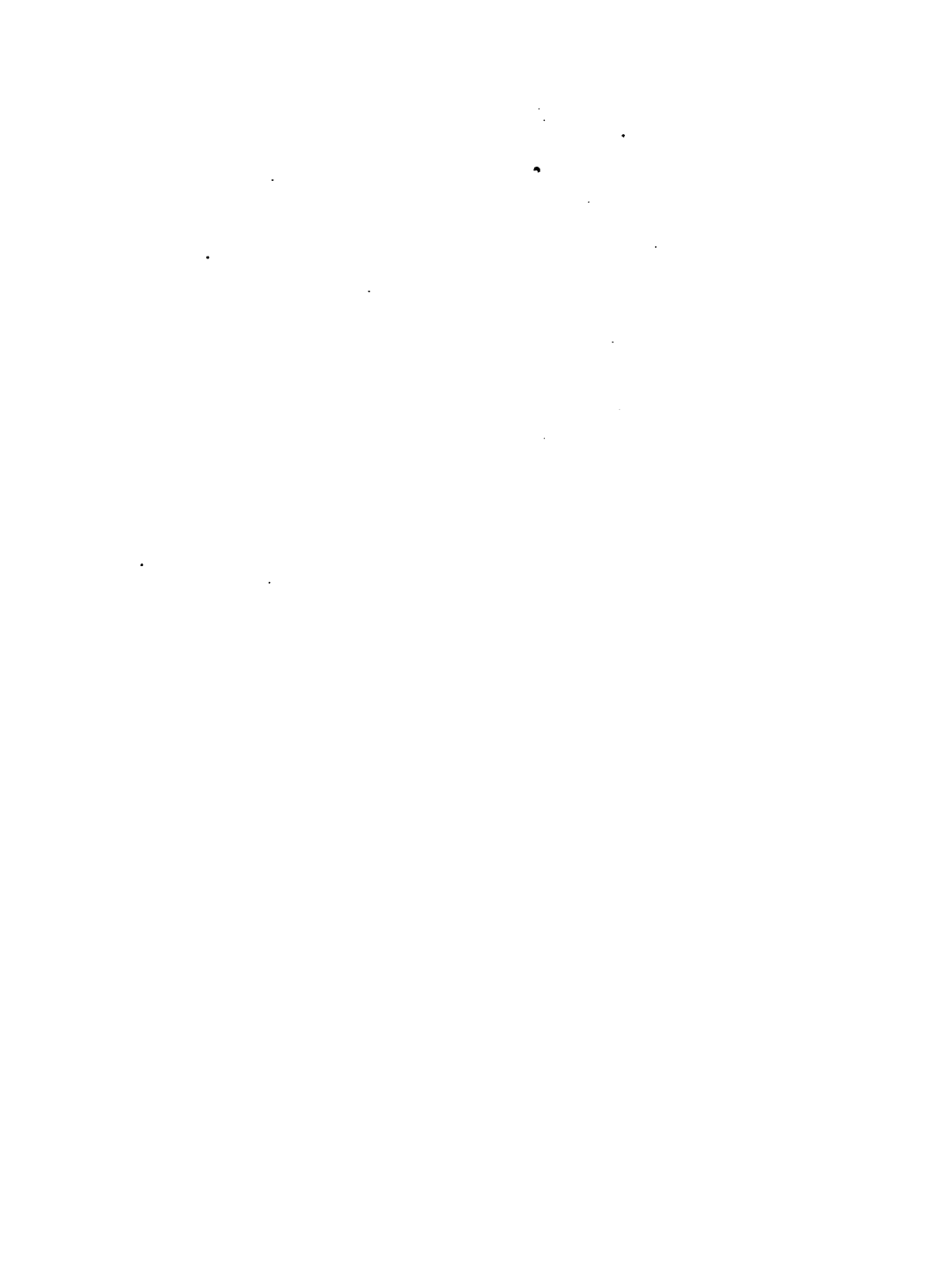


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MEMOIR OF
NICHOLAS PAVILLON,
BISHOP OF ALET.

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NICOLAS PAVILLON.

Bishop of Alet.

From a Contemporary Print.

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INTRODUCTORY.



THE name of Nicholas Pavillon is little known to English readers. The "Select Memoirs of Port Royal," by the late Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, contains a brief account of his life and character, so full of interest as probably to have awakened in many minds a desire to learn something more of so remarkable a man.

By some it may perhaps be thought that to publish the life of a Bishop not of our own Church needs some apology ; but, happily, we live in days wherein a general willingness prevails to appreciate good wherever it may be found, and to search for it, even in the literature of Continental Churches, and especially in that of the Gallican Church, of which the subject of this memoir was a distinguished ornament. The spirit of faith and charity is the common property of all denominations of Christian men and women. How loved and respected by all parties is the memory of the amiable Archbishop of Cambray ! Fénelon and Pavillon were kindred spirits, but there was this difference,—while the former thought it right to suppress the work which contained his most cherished religious opinions, in obedience to the authority of Rome, the latter, under somewhat similar circumstances, felt it to be his duty to maintain the Truth at

all hazards, and persevered in doing so under grievous persecutions, resisting to the last day of his life what he held to be an unlawful assertion of arbitrary authority on the part of both King and Pope. Doubtless both these excellent men acted most conscientiously, and we would humbly believe that in the submission of the one there was as great a triumph of Christian virtue as in the firmness of the other.

But the English Churchman who peruses this little volume will hardly fail to be reminded of another holy Bishop of his own Church, between whom, and the subject of this memoir, there exists even a closer resemblance,—our own beloved Ken. In the lives of these two good men the following points of similarity may be mentioned :—As boys at school, both Ken and Pavillon were examples to their schoolfellows ; both were unspotted in youth, and through life possessed, in a remarkable degree, the same innocence of character ; they were gifted with the same intellectual ability and persuasive eloquence ; and they evinced the same poverty of spirit and uncovetousness of disposition ; both maintained the same firmness of purpose and unswerving fidelity to their convictions ; both felt an extreme reluctance to take part in the existing controversies of the day ; both led ascetic lives which were a continual death to animal appetites ; both were called in the order of Divine Providence to rebuke monarchs ; and lastly, both were faithful confessors for the Truth, suffering the loss of all things rather than betray their consciences or their ministry.

It is related of the Bishop of Alet, as a literal fact, though many will scarcely credit it, that he was acquainted with both the temporal and spiritual wants of every single in-

dividual throughout the whole of his extensive diocese, including even children above ten years old. Happy day for the English Church when her laity shall have the privilege of enjoying something more of the thought, and care, and presence of their chief pastor than now generally falls to their lot. Perhaps this little volume may, by the Divine blessing, help in some measure to awaken a deeper appreciation of the great value of the Episcopate, and also an earnest desire that the blessings and advantages belonging to so high an office may be more widely diffused among us. If not, at least it is to be hoped that, notwithstanding all its imperfections, the portraiture presented in it of a truly godly bishop and faithful follower of our Lord, may be found useful to persons in all states and conditions of life, and afford them some encouragement to be steadfast in the faith, and to persevere in the pursuit and attainment of all Christian virtues.

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CHAPTER I.

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NICHOLAS PAVILLON, the subject of this memoir, was born in Paris, on the 17th of November, 1597. The family of the Pavillons, originally resident in Tours, had long been settled in Paris. Stephen Pavillon, the father of Nicholas, held an honourable appointment under the Government of France. His wife's name was Catherine de Bistrade. His brother Nicholas was the celebrated parliamentary advocate, a learned classic, and the best poet of his time.

Stephen Pavillon and his wife, though possessed of an ample income, lived very simply, and brought up their children to despise luxuries. Their household was conducted upon Christian principles, and with such regularity and simplicity as to resemble a species of monastery. No servant was received into it that was not known to be pious. At morning and evening prayer, when the household assembled as one family to worship God, no member of it was permitted to be absent. The duty of regular attendance at the services of the parish church on the Sundays and festivals of the year was carefully enforced, as well as the observance of those fasts which the Church appoints, as a valuable means, in conjunction with prayer, of obtaining that mastery

over the flesh without which there can be no true holiness. The heads of the household required nothing of their domestics that they did not themselves practise. Out of their income, which was very considerable, they spent only what was necessary for their daily wants; the remainder they looked upon as belonging to the poor and indigent, among whom they dispensed it in a plentiful shower of blessing. Madame Pavillon, whose tender and compassionate heart felt deeply for the distressed poor, took great delight in visiting them and in relieving their wants. In this work she associated with herself another lady, and they together compounded remedies which they carried to the sick poor. The blessing of God rested abundantly on this work of charity; the poor flocked to them from all quarters, they relieved their necessities and dressed their wounds with their own hands.

Well might we expect that a child born of such parents, and nourished in the bosom of so Christian a family, would not fail to be trained and instructed in a manner accordant with the examples of practical piety which were daily before his eyes. As a child, the young Nicholas had an excellent disposition, and his great docility, and the natural inclination which he evinced for pious exercises, were an additional inducement to his parents to devote all their care and assiduity to train him up in the path of wisdom and godliness. As soon as he was of an age to comprehend the public services of the Church he was brought to attend them regularly. He listened with an interest and attention remarkable in one so young; his memory was so retentive that when he returned home he would delight his parents by repeating what he had heard, and that too in the style and grave manner of the preacher, and with great natural vivacity, an early evidence of the power which in after life he used with such effect.

He learned the first elements of the Latin tongue in his father's house, after which he was placed in the college of Navarre. The care of his education was committed to a pious clergyman, who laboured as diligently to instruct his young charge in piety as in letters. The rapidity of his progress raised him greatly in the estimation of his fellow students; the goodness of his heart won their love; and such was the influence for good he had already attained, that his simple presence was sufficient to control them and retain them at their duties. Prayer was his delight; when the service was concluded, it was his custom to remain in the church for some time after all had retired, that he might hold communion with God in the solemn stillness of the sanctuary. His whole life and conversation bore evidence that God had marked him for His own, and that one day he would occupy a position of importance in the ministry of the Church. It was not long before he declared his strong desire for this vocation. This was just what his parents wished, and with more zeal than prudence they caused him immediately to receive the tonsure,—the preliminary ceremony before entering Holy Orders in the Church of Rome. It would have been wiser on their part had they allowed a reasonable time to elapse before they complied with their son's wish, to prove whether this was really his true calling. "I was hurried into this too quickly," said he, when alluding to this circumstance, on more than one occasion in after life. This first step was soon followed by the next in order; and had not God truly called him to the service of the Church, the unbecoming haste with which he was pressed into it might have been attended with evil consequences.

We must not pass over a circumstance which happened about this time, and which serves to show that the subject of this memoir had attained, even at this early period, a de-

votedness for God both large and enlightened. His father, by means of his wealth and influence, had obtained for him the appointment of Canon in the church of Condom, to which a considerable stipend was attached. This he seems to have done without consulting his son's inclination, and without any endeavour to ascertain whether or not this destination and provision for the young Nicholas was in harmony with the Divine will. But while man proposes God disposes. The young Pavillon felt no desire for this appointment, and besought his parents to permit him to relinquish it. Little acquainted with the rules of the Church so rarely observed in these matters, they gave their consent to their son's request, on condition that he retained a portion of the stipend belonging to the Canonicate. He obeyed, but, after the example of Saint Charles, the good Bishop of Milan, he devoted it entirely to works of charity. This, however, did not satisfy him; he could not help feeling that if he was not rendering any service to the Church, in the place where his benefice was situated, he could have no just right to any portion of the emolument belonging to it, even though he were to dispose of it all in almsgiving. That, however common in modern times this appropriation of Church funds might be, it was unknown in the earlier and purer ages of the Church. That the sole motive for it must be cupidity, and that there could not be any real title to it, since the intention of the pious founders of these livings who gave their wealth to the Church was simply to provide for the subsistence of God's ministers while labouring in His vineyard, and to support them when old and worn out in His service. That the Church, too, in several of her ancient canons, has laid it down as a rule, that whatever surplus funds remain over and above the sum that may be required for the *frugal* subsistence of her ministers, were to be distributed among the poor; and that

it was a sentiment of frequent occurrence in the writings of the Fathers, that "the goods of the Church are the patrimony of the poor." It was in a spirit of enlightened piety that M. Pavillon considered this subject. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on Thee," was the language of his heart in this matter. The result was, that he entirely relinquished this living, for which he felt he could have no just claim.

Having completed his classical studies he returned to the house of his parents, and began a course of philosophy, after which he received instruction in theology in the celebrated college of the Sorbonne. It was at this time that he applied himself to that study of the Holy Scriptures which continued through the whole of his life, and to this study he devoted himself with zeal and industry. It was thus he obtained that deep acquaintance with the written word of God, which, under the Divine blessing, made him so able an expositor of its sacred truths. M. de Poinceval, his first spiritual guide and director, had procured for him the acquaintance of a man whose zeal for God, and apostolic labours among the poor and neglected classes of the great city of Paris, has made his name famous. This was M. Vincent, founder of the "Congregation of the Mission," and it was under his direction that he pursued for five years his theological studies in the Sorbonne. It was at this time that M. Vincent was beginning to carry into execution his plan for conveying the saving truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost and degraded classes of a great city,—a home mission upon an extended scale. Discerning in his pupil those qualities which eminently fitted him for this work, M. Vincent engaged him in it, and employed him, in the first instance, in visiting the prisons and holding classes of instruction. M. Pavillon entered upon this work with zeal, and so successful were his labours in this mission field,

that M. Vincent termed him "his right arm." In order that he might speak with more authority in the small parishes around Paris, and the religious houses which he also visited, M. Vincent caused him to be made a sub-deacon. It was always a subject of pain to M. Pavillon in after life that he was constrained to take this step so early, and before he properly understood the full extent and solemn responsibility of this engagement. No sooner, however, had he entered into this first order in the Christian ministry than he sought to be more enlightened on the nature of its obligation; and it was only, therefore, with the greatest repugnance that he received the Diaconate, and would not consent to his director's wishes that he should enter upon the priesthood until a long subsequent period.

We cannot, perhaps, sufficiently estimate the value of sound religious books in giving a direction to youthful minds. And there can be little doubt that the mind of Pavillon early received a tone which had an important influence on his future life from the religious books which were his companions almost from his infancy; and it is a striking indication of the early grace which was alive in his soul, that among the many works of this class which he had read, none gave him so much delight as those of S. Francis de Sales. They made a deep impression upon him, and he naturally conceived a singular esteem for their author. Whenever this great man preached in Paris M. Pavillon never failed to hear him, and to be present when he celebrated the Holy Communion. He retained through life the same respect and esteem for this holy bishop that he had conceived for him in his youth; and so great was the appreciation he ever entertained for his works, that one of his volumes was always to be seen upon his table.

Though living at this time in the house of his father, he passed the greatest portion of his time in the solitude of his own chamber. He considered that his clerical vocation did not permit him to mingle in any secular matters, or take part in the affairs of the family, especially as he had brothers who could lighten the cares of their father. Filled with an ardent desire to serve God and His Church in the vocation to which His Providence had called him, his great aim was to fit himself for the conscientious performance of his duties. For this purpose, therefore, he devoted the whole of his time to prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures; also to the assiduous study of the Fathers and the history of the Church, which he had commenced while pursuing his course of theology, and which he never afterwards entirely laid aside. At the instance of M. Vincent, he devoted two whole years to the study of the writings of St. Thomas d'Aquinas, as above all others most valuable in forming an able theologian. His parents, aware of his great capabilities for learning, were urgent that he should enter upon a career that would lead to distinction. But worldly reputation and honours had for him no charms; his great desire was to be a useful and industrious labourer in the Lord's vineyard; and he pursued his studies, not for the purpose of making himself a name and obtaining degrees, but with the single aim of acquiring a deep knowledge of the religion of the heart, and of being able to convey that knowledge to the poorest and the most ignorant. Trials were not wanting to shake his resolution, but, strengthened by Divine grace, he kept firmly to his purpose, and it was in vain that his parents endeavoured to win him over to the design they entertained at this time to purchase for him the honourable and lucrative post of Almoner to the King.

The death of his father, which took place about the time

he commenced the work of the missions under the direction of M. Vincent, made no difference whatever in his projects. In consequence of this event he succeeded to a very ample income. He consecrated it to God, devoting it to His service in the work of the missions, and continuing with redoubled zeal to aid his director in his apostolical labours. Upon becoming a deacon, he devoted himself with increased assiduity to this work, and was unremitting in his visits to the poor and sick, instructing them in the truths of the Gospel, and furnishing them with temporal succour, in the hope of rendering them more sensible to the spiritual benefits he distributed abundantly in the course of his visits. Among these labours of love which he pursued so diligently was one in which he took great delight. This was the endeavour to restore peace in families that had been separated by strife and contention; and to terminate lawsuits by bringing about an amicable understanding. He was often astonished at the success which God gave to him in this kind of labour, which frequently seemed, before he entered upon it, to be hopeless for any good result.

Though, even at this time, he had attained a great measure of that grace which is the great characteristic of the true follower of Jesus,—a deep humility,—he has since confessed that there was a lurking vanity in his mind, of which on one occasion he was made very sensible. He had concluded a discourse which he had delivered with probably more than his usual ability; he regarded it with some degree of satisfaction, and, after leaving the pulpit, made allusion to it in his conversation with the Curé of the place. He hoped that some complimentary remark would have been made respecting it; he was disappointed. The Curé, perceiving the lurking vanity in the conversation of his visitor, endeavoured to teach him a lesson of humility. “Go, young man,” said he, “you will do better another time.” So

sensible a reply, far from offending M. Pavillon, produced the effect that was intended,—it cured him instantly; and the fruit which he afterwards drew from it filled him with thankfulness for the well-deserved rebuke that had been given to him. It was a “precious balm that had not broken his head.” An adventure which happened to M. Vincent at this time was the means of effectually remedying another fault which M. Pavillon shared in common with many young preachers, and some, indeed, more advanced in experience, namely, the excessive length of their discourses. One day, as M. Vincent was journeying to visit the villages in which his missionaries were pursuing their labours, he met with a herdsman who had left his flock of goats to listen to his sermon; when he had concluded, he enquired of this man an account of the progress of the mission, and if it had produced any fruit. “We are exceedingly obliged to these gentlemen,” replied the peasant; “they tell us excellent things, but their sermons are too long; for you see, sir,” said he, “we country people are like our wine casks, when once they are full it is no use pouring in any more liquor, it only falls to the ground and is lost.” This candid and plain spoken confession convinced M. Vincent that long discourses, instead of instructing the minds of the people only embarrassed them, and he consequently recommended his assistants to limit their sermons to half an hour, or three-quarters at the very most. M. Pavillon found this rule so judicious, that when he afterwards became an overseer himself he prescribed it to all his clergy.

Though deeply attached to M. Vincent, for whom he had the greatest veneration, M. Pavillon had no desire to become a member of the society which this holy man had founded, namely, “The Congregation of the Mission.” His simple desire, if it pleased God to call him to the Priesthood, was to devote himself to the work of assisting the Curé of

country village in the exercise of his ministry. Such a position was best suited, he considered, to the measure of his abilities; anything beyond this he looked upon with alarm, fully persuaded that many who enter the ministry too often make shipwreck of their humility by undertaking lightly and with little concern situations of grave responsibility. In later years, after he had been raised to the Episcopate, he frequently remarked that God had answered his prayer by making him the Bishop of a *village*. For, indeed, there were numbers of villages in France more considerable in every respect than the little town of Alet, which did not contain at that time more than six hundred communicants.

M. Pavillon felt the greatest reluctance to enter upon the Priesthood. It was only with difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to take this step, into which he was in a measure forced when at the age of thirty years. He had prepared himself for this high and holy calling while a deacon, first of all by a long course of missionary labours such as we have described, by the constant endeavour to live in the habitual practice of every Christian virtue, and by continual prayer. It was thus he endeavoured to qualify himself for the high dignity and weighty office of the Priesthood, one which he felt demanded the entire consecration of body, soul, and spirit to its service, and the abandonment of every occupation which interfered in any way with its duties; and he trembled at the thought of the many souls for which he should be answerable, and lest, by his negligence, any of Christ's flock committed to his charge should stray away and be lost.

His ordination was accompanied by a very sensible increase of grace and heavenly illumination. This was no sooner apparent to the discerning mind of M. Vincent than he disarranged the projects of the newly ordained priest to bury himself in the obscurity of a country village. He

believed that the Church could be better served by M. Pavillon by employing the light and power which God had given to him in a sphere of more extensive usefulness, and he consequently engaged him to preside over the weekly conferences of clergy which he had just established, and which met every Saturday in the house of the Mission. He commissioned him also to give advice and instruction to the candidates for Holy Orders, and to draw up and prepare papers of examination and instruction on all matters of Christian doctrine and piety.

The wisdom, the unction, and dignity with which for several years M. Pavillon performed these duties procured for him the esteem and admiration of all his auditors ; and so valuable were his discourses considered that his successors in this office believed they could not do better than adopt them, as they contained so much sound instruction, arranged with more method and treated with greater exactitude than could be found in any compositions upon similar subjects which had previously appeared.

CHAPTER II.

Obtains great fame as a preacher—is offered the See of Alet by Cardinal Richlieu—his thoughts upon the dangers and responsibilities of the Episcopate—is prevailed upon to accept the Cardinal's offer—enters a state of great depression ;—bulls for his consecration delayed two years—undertakes a mission to one of the Cardinal's estates—and another to St. Germain's—preaches before the Court—conversions among the nobility—opposition—the King offers him the rich See of Auxerre—which he declines.



PAVILLON had a great dread of notoriety. The words of a late bishop, describing what he felt to be the want of our day, expresses so well the character of the subject of our memoir, that we quote his words,—“His piety was of that deep, retiring, modest, and noiseless kind which loves to hide itself from the gaze of man : which does not seek a name or repute for godliness, but in secret ministrations and hidden holiness sweetens and purifies the atmosphere of the world.”

In order to avoid the danger of acquiring a reputation or bringing himself into general notice, M. Pavillon made a resolution to avoid at any time preaching in Paris, and this resolution he faithfully kept for several years ; but in the year 1637, being much pressed to preach an octave of sermons in the church of St. Croix, in the vicinity of his residence, he gave way to the urgent requests of his friends.

His first sermons made so great an impression that crowds were attracted to hear him, and his friend and neighbour, M. D'Andilly, notwithstanding the engrossing nature of his duties at Court, was unwilling to lose one of them. The earnestness of the preacher, and his powerful and luminous

words so deeply impressed him that he could not help speaking of them to the whole Court in terms of admiration. The consequence was that many persons of distinction conceived a great desire to hear M. Pavillon, among whom were the Princess Royal, the Duchess of Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richlieu, and several lords and ladies of the Court. The report which these distinguished persons gave of the power and talents of the preacher greatly increased the numbers that flocked to hear him, and so great was the demand for seats that they had to be secured for several hours before the service commenced ; and guards were posted at the doors of the church to prevent confusion from the crowds that endeavoured to gain admission. It happened that among those who were awakened to conviction by the instrumentality of these discourses was the Duchess of Aiguillon ; she had been so deeply affected by one of them at which she was present, that after the conclusion of the service, and when the congregation had dispersed, she remained a considerable time in the church to meditate and to pray. Upon her return, Cardinal Richlieu, whose dinner had been kept waiting in consequence of her absence, asked her what had detained her so long at church. She confessed that she had been so deeply touched with the truths which she had just listened to, that she could not help remaining in the church to pour out her heart before God. She enlarged much upon the merits of the preacher, who entertained so humble an idea of his own powers, that after he had preached his first sermon he could not believe that any one would return to hear him again.

The high position that M. Pavillon held in public esteem, and the reputation which his apostolic labours in the work of the Missions, and his instruction to the candidates for the Ministry at Saint Lazarre had obtained for him, were outwardly the cause of his appointment to the See of A

which at this time fell vacant through the death of M. Polverel. Cardinal Richlieu, annoyed with the importunities of the Marshal Schombertz and the Baron de Mons, who wished to obtain this appointment for a brother of the latter, and always careful to select persons of known merit for these important positions in the Church, determined to bestow it upon M. Pavillon, whose talents and piety he had been made acquainted with as we have described. But before presenting his name to the King, he spoke of him to His Majesty's Confessor and to M. Vincent ; he also consulted some other persons besides in whose opinions he had confidence. Upon their favourable testimony he sent for M. Pavillon. It may well be imagined that a man so humble minded, and whose opinion of himself was so different from that which the public and those who knew him entertained for him, would feel himself quite unworthy of the choice which had been made of him for so distinguished a position in the Church. He could not be prevailed upon to accept a dignity for which he entertained a very exalted idea, and which he considered demanded those rare qualities and talents which he could not discern in himself. He besought, he implored the Minister to select some other person better able to sustain a burden so far beyond his powers. The Cardinal, accustomed to receive refusals in these matters, which he could readily perceive were the result, in most cases, of a false humility, was convinced, however, of the sincerity of M. Pavillon, and endeavoured by various arguments to overcome his scruples, but in vain. Finally, he requested him to take eight days to consider of it, and in the meantime to consult those advisers in whom he had confidence.

M. Pavillon was at this time in his fortieth year. He possessed, in an eminent degree, those gifts and qualifications which are essential to a successful discharge of the

very weighty and onerous duties of a Bishop in the Church of God. His age was mature, and the powers of mind and body had attained their full strength and energy. In prayer and retirement, which to him had always been delightful, he had continually nourished the gift of God's grace which he had received at his Baptism ; and from the time in which he had been joined to Christ in that holy Sacrament he had loved and served God in the purity of his heart, and had steadily advanced in spiritual growth and strength. With the assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures, the rules and practice of holy living, and the regulations and discipline of the Church was combined an experience of nearly twenty years, employed in the various duties of the Christian ministry, pursued with indefatigable courage and industry ; and God had crowned these qualifications with the gift of utterance and the power of touching the heart. But his deep humility had closed his eyes to these evident marks of a vocation, for which those who knew him could not doubt his fitness.

While considering the offer of the Cardinal, his mind became more and more agitated by conflicting thoughts. On the one hand, he feared lest he should be resisting the order of God's Providence ; on the other, the heavy burdens, the unceasing cares, the extraordinary requirements, the overwhelming responsibilities, and the alarming dangers of the Episcopal office, arrayed themselves before his mind in startling magnitude. With his lowly ideas of himself, his humility was pained when he considered the dignity and exaltation of succeeding to the office of the holy apostles of Jesus Christ,—to be invested with their power and authority, to be a ruler and governor in Christ's household, and to be entrusted with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And if the honour were great, the duty and responsibility of such a position appeared to him to be for-

midable indeed. "To be charged with the Lord's people, to have to answer for them before God at the last great day (for the Bishop is he of whom St. Paul says,—'The Lord will require an account of the souls over whom they rule and watch,'—Heb. xiii. 17); and as Jacob kept the sheep of Laban, so do the Chief Shepherds keep the sheep of Christ; and as Jacob had to answer for every sheep that was stolen and for every lamb that was torn by a wild beast, so they too will be held answerable, if by their fault one of Christ's sheep perish. And this care and watching cost Jacob much pain. 'In the day the drought consumed me,' said he to Laban, 'and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes;' and what anxious days, what sleepless nights, must that faithful shepherd endure, who, knowing the nature and extent of his pastoral office, devotes his life and powers in the spirit of willing sacrifice to fulfil it. And a good Bishop must indeed be prepared for a life of heavy care, of weary watching, of unceasing labour, to guide the wayward, to restrain the wandering, to seek the lost. What depth of love must he bring to such a task! what patience! what gentleness! How large a measure of the Spirit of his Heavenly Master must fill the soul of him who would venture upon such an occupation! And how awful to contemplate what the result must be if patience should fail, love grow cold, and if other aims and objects should divide the attention. Will Christ easily lose those for whom He gave His precious blood, the souls so dear to God? and will not His anger burn when at the last great day it shall appear that through the carelessness of those who ruled His household, and their love for temporal things, so many souls have perished, who, had they been carefully tended, might have shone as the stars in heaven. And what hope can they have of sharing the glories of the Redeemer's kingdom, by whose negligence there has been less joy in

heaven, because sinners have not been converted, God not glorified, the people not instructed, and heaven not filled? In that great day, when pastor and flock shall together appear before the judgment seat, how will the careless shepherd bear to hear the reproach of Him who gave His life for the sheep, when, finding so many wanting, He shall say in the prophet's language, 'Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?' " (Jer. xiii. 20.)

Well might such thoughts as these fill the soul of Pavillon with fear and dread, and the more he pondered them, the more he felt convinced of his insufficiency for the Episcopal office; but on the other hand, the fear of resisting the order of God constrained him to follow the advice of the Cardinal to seek the counsel of his friends. He brought the subject before M. Vincent, his director, and some others in whom he had confidence. He fully opened to them his mind, and explained all the reasons which inclined him to refuse the Cardinal's offer, and which, he told them, grew in strength the more he reflected upon the magnitude and importance of the duties of the Episcopate, and the multitude of cares and business which fell to the lot of a bishop. His friends were unanimously opposed to the resolution he had taken, and they all urged him to accept a vocation for which his qualifications were so evident. Their entreaties had no effect, and he remained still undetermined. The time which the Cardinal had given for consideration had now nearly elapsed, when M. Vincent determined to make one more effort to bring him to a different mind. From his intimate knowledge of M. Pavillon, he felt deeply of what importance it was to the Church that this opportunity of obtaining such a man for one of her bishops should not be lost. He sought him, he reasoned with him, he reminded him of the serious consequences that might ensue from his refusal. "I will raise my voice against you in the day of judgment," said

“with the souls of the diocese of Alet, who will perish for lack of that instruction which you refuse to give them. It is to this remote country and its rugged hills that a true zeal for the house of God and the welfare of his creatures ought to take you. I know that you possess sufficient ability to rescue these poor ignorant and abandoned people from their depth of ignorance, and you ought to hope that God, who calls you to this work, will supply you with all that is wanting, in order that you may accomplish His will.” M. Pavillon was deeply agitated, and eventually his resolution gave way under the conviction that the will of God called him to the Bishopric of Alet.

At this time a circumstance took place at Alet which appeared to indicate in a somewhat striking manner that the choice which had fallen upon M. Pavillon to fill its vacant see was in accordance with the Divine will. The occurrence was the sudden conversion of the wife of one of its chief magistrates. Deeply touched by God, she felt greatly the necessity of some spiritual guide and counsellor in whom she could have confidence, to lead her in the path on which she had just entered, and it is an indication of the spiritual destitution of the town of Alet at that time that none such could be found. She continued to pour out her heart in earnest prayer to God, that it would please Him to send her such a guide. Suddenly her mind became impressed with the idea that the successor to the Bishop who had just died was the person whom God had accorded to her prayers. On relating this circumstance afterwards, she declared that so vivid was the impression upon her mind that she could not doubt that God was the author of it, as the event proved. It was this pious lady who afterwards rendered such valuable assistance to the good Bishop, her director, and whom he selected to establish the community of Regents, whose missionary labours in the diocese of Alet were so greatly

blessed, and of which there will be occasion to speak hereafter. Under his direction also she became one of the chief benefactresses to the sick poor of Alet. She continued these labours until her death, which followed shortly after that of the good Bishop, her director, whom she had obtained by so many prayers.

M. Pavillon, believing that God had called him to the Episcopate, presented himself again to Cardinal Richlieu, and informed him of his submission to the counsels of his friends. The Cardinal, who received him with great kindness, testified his satisfaction at the result, and at once ordered the necessary documents to be prepared which nominated him to the vacant see. But no sooner had M. Pavillon received his nomination than all his doubts and fears returned with redoubled force; he fell into a state of deep melancholy, his mind became seized with a terror which quite incapacitated him from any application, food was distasteful to him, and sleep forsook him. His body, reduced by want of nourishment and rest, grew daily weaker and weaker, and his friends became seriously apprehensive that he would lose not only his health but his life also. The chief ground of his alarm, which had reduced him to this pitiable state, was the feeling of his incapacity,—it filled his whole mind and weighed him down. He condemned himself bitterly for having brought upon himself so heavy a burden. Under the pressure of this feeling his imagination pictured to him the most alarming objects. He beheld himself consigned, together with his flock, to the place of torment; he thought he heard their cries calling down vengeance from God upon him who, by his temerity in undertaking to be their conductor, had brought them there. The presence of M. Vincent and his other friends was insupportable to him; he could not see them without trembling, and he afterwards declared that the effect

his mind which seeing them produced was as if he beheld an apparition of demons. He considered them as the sad cause of an engagement which he believed would result fatally for his salvation, and not his only, but also for the souls of those for whom he had become responsible to God. He remained in this distressing state for about three months. Alluding to what he had undergone in after life, he has remarked, that these kinds of trials and sufferings are incomprehensible except to those who have experienced them. Meanwhile, those means which seemed proper to be taken for the recovery of his health were not neglected. He sought some change of air and scene, and made various pilgrimages to places which had been in former times the resort and abode of holy persons. Thus occupied, while one day he was engaged in prayer, imploring relief from the heavy pressure and despondency under which he suffered, in a moment the succour he so earnestly besought arrived. The clouds which enveloped his soul suddenly dispersed, his troubles ceased, his heart dilated, and the sweetest peace succeeded in an instant to the terror and alarm which had so long oppressed him. He could now say, from a very blessed experience, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm xxxiv. 4.) This happy moment terminated all his doubts; they never returned, and he could say, at the close of a long and useful life, that since this happy termination of his pains he has never afterwards suffered the least inquietude respecting his engagement, and that under the heaviest crosses of his Episcopal career the courage and fortitude which God gave him never deserted him. Being delivered from this severe dispensation, which it pleased God to send to him, in common with many of his most faithful servants, to prove them and purify them, he left his mother's house, where up to this period he had resided, for that of St. Lazarre, in

order to prepare himself for his consecration. In consequence of the misunderstanding that existed at this time between the Courts of Rome and France, two years elapsed before the Bulls necessary for this purpose could be obtained, and this period of waiting, M. Pavillon devoted to prayer and study, in order to prepare himself to break the bread of God's holy word to the people whom God was confiding to his care.

It was not, however, the will of God that these two years should be passed by M. Pavillon wholly in solitude and inactivity. He had a work for him to do among the retinue of the Court, and the way in which he was led to it was as follows: Cardinal Richlieu, having requested M. Vincent to send some of his spiritual workers on a mission to the neighbourhood of one of his residences, also expressed a wish that M. Pavillon should be one of the number. M. Vincent complied. The success which attended these efforts reached the ears of the King, who desired a similar mission should be undertaken at St. Germain, where the Court resided during a portion of the year. The excellent discourses of M. Pavillon, and the power and effect of his preaching, had been reported to the King, and at his desire he accompanied this mission to St. Germain, and preached several sermons before the Court, at which the King was present. Such was the force of his appeals and such the clearness with which he held before his auditors a view of the Christian life, that the hardest hearts appeared to be softened, and many persons were sincerely converted to God. Several of the ladies of the Court in the retinue of the Queen renounced their vain amusements, laid aside the immodest style of dress which fashion had introduced, and gave up their worldly entertainments. Several devoted themselves to works of Christian usefulness, and entered the institution of the "Ladies of Charity," which had been

previously founded at St. Germain, and occupied themselves in visiting and relieving the sick poor. But this work of God among the gay followers of the Court was not destined to be exempt from the opposition which all efforts for His glory in the salvation of sinners has to encounter from the enemy of souls. Offended with the change in the life and occupations of their former gay associates, some of the courtiers represented to the King that it was very hazardous for the health of the Queen that her ladies should expose themselves, by their visits to the poor, to an atmosphere infected by disease. The Queen, however, little moved with this pretended danger, expressed to the King her entire satisfaction in the change which had taken place in the ladies of her Court, and spoke in high terms of M. Pavillon, upon whom those who were offended at his preaching had heaped reproaches. She gave him her entire confidence, and thus endeavoured to sustain while in its infancy the good work which he had effected. But the enemies of religion, who were scandalized by the reformed lives of their companions, were exasperated when they found their endeavours to frustrate this new movement had failed, and sought by calumnies to revenge themselves upon the author of it. M. Pavillon, filled with zeal for the salvation of sinners, and also for their edification and instruction in the Christian life, adapted his discourses to the state and social position of his hearers. Among these, attached to the Court, were many officers and soldiers, and he endeavoured to give them some Christian counsel as to the duties of their station. He denounced the corruption which prevailed in many who held responsible positions, and especially of the extortions which were commonly practised by officers in the army. Such teaching offered a sufficient handle to the enemies of order to misrepresent him to the King. They accused him of teaching sedition, and gained

over the soldiers, to whom he had quoted the words of the Baptist "to be content with their wages," to complain to the King of his instructions, which, if they followed, would cause them, they said, to quit the service of his majesty, as affording them an insufficient sum for their subsistence. Alarmed by their accusations, the King spoke to M. Pavillon, who drew up a statement of his doctrine, and prayed that it might be submitted to the doctors of the Sorbonne for their examination. They gave it their entire approval, and M. Pavillon continued to enjoy the favour and confidence of his majesty. So great was the esteem of the King for him that, imagining one of his reasons for not wishing to accept the bishopric of Alet was its poverty and remoteness, and being desirous of having so worthy a man near his Court, he offered him the rich see of Auxerre instead, which had just then fallen vacant. But it was the will of God that His faithful servant should be a bright example of the inviolable attachment to the rules of the Church incumbent on all her pastors. Thanking the King for this new mark of his favour, he declined it, saying that he was no longer free to exercise any choice ; that he was no longer his own, since he had been given to the Church of Alet ; and that from the moment that the King had judged him necessary for the welfare of that diocese it was not permitted him to abandon it.

CHAPTER III.

His consecration—holds an Ordination—his thoughts on Ordination—leaves Paris for his diocese—journey—arrival at Alet—description of the scenery of Alet—state of the town of Alet and the Episcopal residence—the Cathedral—the previous bishop a layman—immoral state of the clergy—spiritual destitution of the people.



THE necessary documents for the appointment of M. Pavillon to the see of Alet having at length arrived from Rome, he was consecrated in the Church of St. Lazarre, upon the Sunday in the Octave of the Assumption, in the year 1639, by the Archbishop of Paris, assisted by the Bishops of Lisieux and Bazas. Eager to commence the new work to which God had called him, he instantly began to make preparations for his departure, but some unforeseen obstacles preventing this from taking place so soon as he had wished, the Archbishop of Paris took advantage of the delay to request M. Pavillon to hold an ordination at the Ember term just approaching, and to give a preparatory course of lectures at St. Lazarre to the candidates for ordination. The idea of lending his holy office to confer orders upon so many persons who were quite unknown to him pained him exceedingly. In obedience, however, to the request of the Archbishop, he gave instructions to the candidates, and exerted himself to the very utmost of his power to impress them with a true sense of the high and holy character of the ministerial office, of its dangers and responsibilities. But this ordination was ever afterwards a source of deep inquietude to M. Pavillon ; he never remembered it without a sigh, for experience had convinced him that many who enter Holy Orders do not

possess those qualifications and dispositions of soul which God requires of those whom He "separates from the congregation to bring near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them." (Numbers xvi. 9.) For they who are to teach holiness must themselves be holy; they who are required to lead the people to the attainment of Christian perfection must themselves be perfect, or at least have made some progress in the knowledge and practise of the perfect way; and he felt persuaded that nothing short of an absolute and entire consecration to God for this service of all the powers of body, soul, and spirit, a single eye and aim for the glory of God, an ardent zeal for the enlargement of the kingdom of our Blessed Redeemer by the conversion of sinners, and of the glory and adornment of it by the perfection of His saints, can alone truly qualify for the office of the Christian ministry. He conceived it to be no light fault to have disregarded the injunction of the holy Apostle to Timothy, "To lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. v. 22); and of this he felt himself to be guilty by having performed this solemn ordination upon those whom neither he nor their diocesan had proved to be duly qualified to receive it. This circumstance led him to make a rule henceforth never to ordain priests except for his own diocese, and then only after careful investigation as to their fitness for this vocation.

As soon as this ordination was over M. Pavillon lost no time in preparing for his departure. In the absence of the King, he took leave of the Queen, by whom he was received with kindness and confidence, and at her request he gave his benediction to the Dauphin, who was present at the interview. She promised him her protection, and the events of the future proved that these promises were sincere. He left Paris on the 8th of October, firmly resolved *never to*

return. A man so beloved by his relatives and friends could not leave them for ever without causing grief ; they were in tears ; his mother alone appeared unmoved, for although she loved him tenderly, it gave her joy she confessed to see her son go where duty called him and where God required him. The King was at this time at Lyons ; M. Pavillon took the route which led through that city, and there took the oath of fidelity to his majesty. He was there counselled by several bishops who were staying there at that time to send the act of his oath to Paris to be registered, as such a proceeding would relieve him from any claim that the Crown might otherwise make upon his revenues in virtue of the right of Regale. He replied that such a formality appeared to him unnecessary, the bishops of Languedoc never having been subject to this law. He did not, therefore, follow their advice, and we shall see in the sequel how much pain and trouble resulted to him in consequence.

From Lyons the Bishop of Alet proceeded to Carcassonne, where he arrived on the 30th October, and on the following day entered Cornavel, the first parish in the Bishopric of Alet. No sooner had he crossed the little bridge which separates Cornavel from Narbonne, and had set his foot for the first time upon the soil of his territory than he knelt down upon the ground and prayed to God to bless his entrance into his diocese. His attendants knelt down with him, and having occupied some time in prayer, they continued their journey, reciting psalms all the way, until they reached the town of Cornavel, where they rested, and kept the festival of All Saints in a castle belonging to the bishopric.

The journey from Paris to Alet occupied three weeks. The good bishop and his attendants formed a little family, bound to each other by the tie of Christian love, and animated with one common aim and interest. Never was

journey more edifying. Every day they received together the Holy Sacrament; every day they assembled together for morning and evening prayer followed by some spiritual discourse. The first thing they did on arriving at any town or village where they proposed to sleep was to proceed to the church, and there spend some time in prayer. Wherever they went the good bishop distributed alms, catechised the children, and gave religious instruction to all who came to him. Everywhere he was received with the greatest respect. At Nismes especially, the regularity and devotion of his conduct attracted great attention, and the Huguenots who occupied the inn where he lodged confessed openly that if all bishops were like him they would not be long in returning to the Catholic Church. The proprietor of the inn, who was also a Huguenot, said, on being asked to present his bill, that if he received nothing he should consider himself well paid by the edification which he and his household had received from such a guest as the Bishop of Alet.

On the 3rd of November they left Cornavel for the little town of Alet, and shortly came in view of a wild and mountainous country, increasing in grandeur and sublimity as it extended upwards into the great Pyrenean chain, which forms the natural boundary between the two countries of France and Spain. As the good bishop gazed upon the physical aspect of his diocese, and beheld a wild and rugged mountain district, rising peak above peak,—those most elevated in the distance,—white with the previous winter's snow; and as he observed the nature of the country into which he was entering, and the roads along which they must pass, winding round precipitous rocks, which the least timid could not contemplate without some degree of alarm, he became silent and thoughtful. The aspect of Nature around him operated upon his mind and deeply affected him. A holy serenity was observed to overspread his countenance.

"This," said he, quoting the 132nd Psalm, "This shall be my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." And during the rest of the journey, until they reached the town of Alet, this psalm entirely occupied his mind; and he has since declared that during the time that he was meditating upon it as he journeyed along, he felt within his soul a fresh effusion of light and grace at every verse of it, which filled him with joy and consolation, and enabled him to appropriate by faith the blessed verities it expressed, and to have confidence that they would be accomplished in him. He also added, that from that day forward his soul had dwelt in a state of tranquil peace, which no moment of weariness had ever altered, and the only fear he had since experienced, was that of being obliged at any time to separate from his church of Alet.

After contemplating the grander features of this mountainous district, its softer beauties, as they approached the town of Alet, became more apparent. A traveller who visited that town, though, indeed, after the labour of years had wrought a change on the physical as well as the spiritual aspect of the country, thus describes his impressions:—

"On drawing near to Alet we were much struck with the variety of the prospects. The beauty and richness of the scenery bordering on the Pyrenees, together with the endless change of landscape, is beyond description. Sometimes the mountains rise in gentle slopes, covered with green herbage, and innumerable herds and flocks feed on their sides. In other places the mountains were wild and rocky, but covered with orange trees in full blossom, together with olive, citron, myrtle, arbutus, and innumerable other trees, exhibiting the richest variety of flower, odour, and foliage. Frequently the steep precipices were clothed with thick wood, down to the very foot of the mountains; at others a bold front of rock would appear, enriched with lichens of every different tint,

and ornamented with elegant festoons of creeping shrubs, or with the wild flowers of the soil, which are very luxuriant and beautiful. We often saw wild goats browsing in the most inaccessible places, and amused ourselves in watching them skip from rock to rock.

“The ride from Limoux to Alet lies through one of the most beautiful and picturesque countries I ever beheld. The ground is beautifully diversified with green hills and fertile dales, with cornfields and cottages. We rode many miles through vineyards, and groves of pomegranate, olive, and oderiferous orange trees; the air was in many places quite perfumed with their fragrance. The peasants' cottages, too, are remarkably pretty. They are generally white, and were either covered with roses and woodbine, or with jessamine and myrtle in full blossom.

“The entrance to Alet is through a defile of rocks, though not very narrow; it is difficult to pass, because the whole width is occupied by a rapid river. The defile winds between the rocks for a full half-league. The pass is fearful. At the termination of the passage the rocks suddenly expand, forming a grand and vast amphitheatre, covered with forests. In the bottom is an extensive and fertile plain, watered by the river Aude, and full of herds and flocks. Immediately in front, about the centre of the valley, appears the noble archiepiscopal palace of Alet. The town itself is inconsiderable. The appearance, however, of the palace is truly magnificent, both in point of size and antiquity; it was built by the ancient Abbots, and is surrounded by very extensive but old-fashioned gardens. In one of them is a noble raised terrace, which commands the whole course of the Aude through the town. The whole appearance of the palace, rising in the midst of its double terraces and gardens, with the magnificent double avenues to every entrance, and a noble stone bridge thrown over the Aude, render the

approach to Alet very striking; the first view, however, comprises the whole of the objects which are worth seeing."

Of the spiritual aspect of the diocese of Alet at the period of the bishop's arrival, it would be difficult to convey an adequate idea. The ignorance and demoralization of the clergy, as well as of the inhabitants, which was a natural consequence, was dreadful to contemplate, and it would have been impossible for M. d'Alet to have beheld the moral wilderness which he was sent to cultivate, and of which the wild country around him seemed only too true an emblem, without being struck with dismay, unless sustained by a great faith and a very uncommon devotion.

The episcopal town, which was then much smaller than at the present day, was in such a dilapidated condition that one of the bishop's friends, passing through it on his return from Catalonia and purposing to take up his quarters there for the night, was so alarmed at its ruinous aspect, and at the extraordinary appearance it presented, that he hastened through it as quickly as possible, apprehensive of being buried beneath the ruins of the houses which on all sides appeared ready to fall upon him. The episcopal palace was also in so ruinous a condition as to be quite uninhabitable. M. d'Alet's predecessors having been accustomed to reside at the more agreeably situated Chateau de Cornavel, had neglected to keep the episcopal residence in repair, and had suffered it to fall into decay. The rain came through in several places, the walls had thus become much injured, and with the continual damp the planks had rotted away. Such was the condition of the Bishop's residence when M. d'Alet made his appearance before it, and it was with great difficulty that his attendants could find a room that was in any degree fit to receive his bed. The parishes of the diocese exhibited the same melancholy picture of ruin. The cathedral was no exception to this

general state of neglect and decay. This ancient church had been partially destroyed by the Huguenots during the period of their contest with the Catholics, when they seized the town of Alet, and it had anciently been used as a refectory by the Benedictines, who held it in possession when Pope John XXII. erected Alet into a bishopric at the commencement of the fourteenth century. The condition in which M. d'Alet found it was wretched in the extreme. The bare soil formed the floor of the nave, and it was so full of filth and excrement as to be unendurable. The choir was separated from this part of the cathedral by a platform of rotten planks in a dilapidated condition; beneath were two unseemly altars, and a simple table served for the grand altar. The sacristy was so poorly provided with the necessary furniture for the decent celebration of the Holy Mysteries, that there were only two articles in it of any value. No order was observed by the people in the House dedicated to the worship of God, they placed themselves promiscuously here and there, having nothing to sit upon except some old pieces of wood which served for steps to ascend into the episcopal chair.

With regard to spiritual matters the state of things which prevailed on the arrival of M. d'Alet was equally deplorable. For nearly a century this bishopric had been held by five or six prelates as if *in Commendam*. It was only in the year 1622, after the spoliation of the town of Alet by the Huguenots, who kept possession of it for a period of ten or twelve years, that M. Polverel, a gentleman of Auvergne, was nominated to this see. He had the reputation of being a pious and learned man, but died before the necessary preparations could be made for his installation. His brother, who was at that time a cavalry officer, an ignorant man, of immoral character and destitute of any learning or ability, and who had done some service for the Crown, was

advised to apply for the vacant bishopric as a recompense for his services. He did so, and some idea may be formed of the fearful abuses prevalent in that day in France during the reign of Louis XIII. by the fact that such an application should be successful. The bishopric of Alet was conferred upon this man in the year 1622, and he kept possession of it until his death, which took place in the year 1637. During the fifteen years of his episcopate his manner of life was very much the same as before he entered upon it. With the revenues of the see he purchased the appointment of Almoner to Queen Mary de Medecis, and also that of Chapel Master to the King. When not at Court he resided chiefly at the Chateau de Cornavel, in company with a female whom he had formerly seduced, and by whom he had several children, two of whom he publicly acknowledged and provided with the best benefices in the diocese. He went so far as to give two or three of the most valuable livings to one of his nieces, who received the revenues and engaged hired priests to perform the duties.

When he visited the cathedral town of Alet, it was his custom to amuse himself by seeing the people dance in the market-place, and on the day of the Assumption, which was the grand festival of the cathedral, dancing went on in the Bishop's residence and was continued during the eight days, of the festival.

The clergy of the diocese were equally as depraved as their superior, whose evil example they readily followed, and in the dances and other amusements that were set on foot they took the leading part. The greater portion of their time was spent in hunting the wild boar, and the rest of it in the practice of every kind of debauchery. It was in this manner that the canons and prebendaries of St. Paul consumed the revenues of their cures by virtue of an "indulgence" which they had obtained from Rome.

During the latter years of the life of M. Polverel, though, unhappily, no attempt was made at reformation, there were moments in which his conscience troubled him, when he reflected upon his own irregularities, and the dissolute lives of his clergy; and from some presentiment, arising, it may be, from a desire for better things, he often told them that the bishop who would succeed him would bring them to order and reform their abuses. After his decease, when they heard that M. d'Alet had been appointed his successor, they perceived he had spoken prophetically; and when informed of the self-denying life and devoted piety of the new bishop who was coming to rule them they were struck with consternation, and, with a view to self-protection, they all combined together to oppose him; and some idea may be formed of the gross ignorance and superstition in which they were sunk, by the fact of their uniting in a vow which they made to the Blessed Virgin to obtain her protection against their new bishop. In a picture which they caused to be painted, they are represented as prostrate at her feet, clothed in their surplices, with a passage of Scripture issuing from their mouths expressive of the intention of their vow.

From this brief description, an idea may be formed of the lamentable condition of the diocese of Alet at this period. For a great number of years there had been no resident bishop. The clergy, left to themselves, had gradually lapsed into indifference and worldliness, which led to ignorance and superstition. The glad tidings of a full and free salvation by faith in a crucified Redeemer was no longer heard. The Gospel ceased to be preached to the people; they neither heard it in exhortations from the pulpit, nor saw it exemplified in the far more effectual example of holy living in those whom God had appointed for their leaders and teachers; and what wonder if, as sheep without a shepherd, they strayed away and were lost upon the dark mountains

of sin and unbelief ; what wonder that a spiritual blight should creep over them and make itself apparent even in the fields they cultivated and the tenements in which they dwelt, so that at length, both in temporal and spiritual matters, this neglected diocese should exhibit a picture of ruin, desolation, and decay.

Such, then, was the state of things when M. Pavillon and his little company entered the town of Alet on the evening of the 3rd of November, 1639. It was a cold and dreary period of the year ; everything was desolate and depressing around. There were no kindred souls to come forward and greet them on their arrival with words of welcome, and to lighten their labours by their affection and sympathy. The aspect of gloom and despondency which the town of Alet wore was well calculated to daunt the stoutest heart. But this servant of God, who soon perceived into what a spiritual wilderness he had entered, and the magnitude of the work to which God had called him, accepted it all from His hand with the meekness of a true disciple of Christ. It was enough for him that it was the *will* of God, and, in the strong undoubting faith expressed in the words of the holy apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," resolved, in the strength of his Divine Master, to bear all, and suffer all, and to devote his life and energies in the accomplishment of the task that lay before him. How nobly and effectually this work was fulfilled ; how, by the grace of God, the victory was gained ; and how, before His faithful servant had finished his course, this waste and desolate wilderness was converted into a happy smiling Eden, it will be our endeavour to lay before our readers in the following chapters.

CHAPTER IV.

The Bishop fixes his residence in the centre of his work—receives the visits of the clergy—establishes fortnightly conferences—inspection of the diocese—sensitiveness of the people—commences a work of reformation first among the clergy—establishes a system for the religious instruction of the people—introduces Church discipline—Jesuit helpers—public penance—its effect—absolution—opposition of the Jesuits—which leads to a permanent estrangement.



D'ALET'S first proceeding on commencing the work of reformation was to fix his residence at Alet, *in the centre of his work*; and this he did in spite of the remonstrances which were made to him that the house was not fit to be inhabited, justifying his choice by saying that he had come among them not for his own pleasure but for their good, and it would not be just to them if, in order to find a residence more comfortable and commodious, he were to go and seek it at the confines of the diocese. He decided, therefore, against ever taking up his abode, as his predecessors had done, in the Chateau de Cornavel. It was necessary, however, to put the house in Alet in some sort of repair; and as soon as this was accomplished, M. d'Alet's first care was to lodge the ecclesiastics who had accompanied him from Paris in the best rooms on the second story. In those on the third story, which contained a species of corridor, he lodged his domestics, taking care that each of them had a separate chamber. His last thought was for himself, and he was content with one of the meanest apartments upon the same landing, no larger than the cell of a monastery. He furnished it very simply,—a table, a reading desk, some bookshelves, and a few joint stools comprising all. This

little room, which had no firegrate, he occupied for several years, until, at the rebuilding and restoration of the episcopal residence, he was urged to descend from a place which was no better than a garret, to occupy an apartment in the lower part of the building, if it were only to relieve the numbers that visited him from the labour of mounting so high.

A few days after the arrival of M. d'Alet, he was visited by all the clergy of the diocese. The report which had reached them of his holy life and character had so far affected them, that, out of fear lest he should act towards them with severity, they had begun, to some extent, to reform their way of life, and desisted from their more scandalous practices. M. d'Alet was informed of this, and when they entered his presence, instead of the sternness and severity they expected, they were received with so much kindness by the good bishop, and with such cordiality and politeness that they were delighted ; their feelings towards him underwent a change, and from that moment they were disposed to enter into the views which he presented to them for the well-being of the diocese, saying to them, that, being ministers of Jesus Christ, he trusted that they would give their hearty co-operation to their bishop in the ministry with which he was charged.

Two formidable obstacles opposed at the outset any endeavour for reformation, and these M. d'Alet had first to encounter, namely, the ignorance of the clergy, and their demoralization, which was the effect of it. The plan which M. d'Alet adopted to overcome the first of these obstacles was to establish conferences in various localities for the instruction of the clergy. With this object in view, he visited the whole of the diocese, and made himself acquainted with the position and natural character of every parish it contained. This being done, he adopted a system of organization, and portioned out the diocese into six divisions, in

each of which he instituted conferences, which were held fortnightly, and at which all the clergy were requested to be present. At these meetings, which occupied two hours at a sitting, the following were the subjects selected for teaching and instruction, viz., the first principles of the doctrine of Christ ; the principal mysteries of the Christian religion ; the Sacraments ; the order of the daily morning and evening prayer of the Church ; the various services of the Church ; and the duty incumbent upon the people to be regular in their attendance upon them ; the duties and responsibilities of the clergy ; the duties of parents towards their children and domestics ; the commandments of God ; and of Church authority. All these subjects were treated in the form of a catechism, and by means of easy and familiar conversation, in so plain and simple a manner, as to be within the comprehension of the most illiterate. At the termination of each meeting, instructions were given upon the rubrics, after which the clergy present were exercised in the ceremonies of the Church, in order that they might be able to celebrate the Holy Mysteries with dignity and solemnity. Opposed as these men were to all order and constraint, there was not one of them who ventured to absent himself from these conferences, for, notwithstanding the natural kindness of their prelate, and his gentleness of manner towards them, they could not fail to perceive in him so much firmness and determination of purpose, that they feared the consequences of any opposition to his will. It was also an assistance to M. d'Alet that the natural genius of the race inhabiting the mountainous district of Alet was favourable to the advancement of the good work. The people inhabiting these mountain regions are possessed of a natural quickness of apprehension and mental activity, and keenly sensitive to the reproach of ignorance. Consequently, the clergy, finding their bishop to be a learned man and determined to

have the people well instructed, made extraordinary efforts to render themselves capable of assisting him in this undertaking. They commenced to catechise the people, to preach to them carefully prepared sermons, to keep faithfully the Sundays and festivals, and, by a laudable emulation, each endeavoured to surpass his other brethren in the ministry by attention to the duties of the ministerial office, in order to win the esteem of their prelate, and to avoid the reproach of ignorance and neglect.

When M. d'Alet commenced his work of reform, the diocese of Alet resembled a wild, uncultivated forest; trees of huge growth required to be cut down, the tangled underwood of briars and thorns cleared away, and the soil prepared for the sowing. At the outset, M. d'Alet had but three fellow-labourers to assist him in this great and laborious undertaking, namely, M. Pelissier, his almoner, whom he had brought from the seminary of St. Nicholas de Chardonnet, and three other priests, members of the congregation of the "Mission," whom he had likewise engaged to accompany him, with the intention of using their services in establishing a seminary at Alet for the instruction and training of clergy for the diocese. These three missionaries remained with him but two years. M. d'Alet found them to be less enlightened than pious, and consequently more suited to follow the rules and observances prescribed by their community, than to give solid instruction to the inhabitants of a country parish. He accordingly wrote to M. Vincent on the subject, who recalled them to St. Lazarre. This experience decided M. d'Alet to avoid selecting, for the future, members of a religious order to co-operate with him in the work of the diocese. He discovered that men who had taken vows, and were subject to the observance of the rules of a community, were apt to work more for the advancement and prosperity of their order than for the general good of the public. Such

persons were unable to enter into the large and comprehensive views of the good bishop, and he consequently determined to associate with himself for the reformation of the diocese and instruction of the people unfettered men, who could work with the freedom of Christian liberty, and who he believed would be better suited for evangelizing an ignorant and neglected population, than men subject to the narrowing influence of vows and rules which, though good in themselves and useful to the individuals who observed them, were not always suited for the active life of a parish priest and pastor of a rural congregation. To the numerous bishops who subsequently consulted M. d'Alet on this subject, he always gave like counsel, advising them to give the direction of their seminaries to men free from engagements, in preference to those members of religious communities, who would be more apt to diffuse their own particular ideas than enter into those of a bishop, who should always be the chief head and ruler of his seminaries.

In a short time the conferences which M. d'Alet had established in his diocese began to be attended with excellent results, and, in order to render them more useful to his clergy and more productive of good to his people, he drew up a short "Epitome of Christian doctrine," which he caused to be printed and distributed among his clergy, together with another little work which he composed for their benefit, entitled "Christian Exercises," both of which he subsequently distributed among the people, in order that they might have before their eyes, in a more extended form, the various points of Christian practice which they heard explained to them from the pulpit. He also instituted a system of pastoral visits to every family in the diocese, by which means he got to know whether the duty of morning and evening prayer was being regularly practised, and the rules of a Christian life duly observed, which were set

before them in the "Christian Exercises." By these means, combined with great gentleness and vigilance, the good bishop had the consolation of leading back great numbers of these wandering sheep into the fold of the Good Shepherd. But to the incorrigible and hardened sinners, upon whom he could make no impression, whom his love and gentleness would not melt, and who resisted all his endeavours to bring them to repentance and amendment of life, he did not hesitate to use the severest measures, and, out of love for their souls, to exercise those powers for correction with which the great Head of the Church has invested His apostles and their successors. Accordingly, when all other means had been tried in vain, he threatened them with excommunication and the interdiction of the Church. The success which attended this "godly discipline," which M. d'Alet had the courage and firmness to apply as a necessary and useful element in the government of his diocese, will be seen in the succeeding chapters.

Soon after the return of the three missionaries of St. Lazarre, M. d'Alet received the Providential succour of M. Ferret, a pious and earnest-minded ecclesiastic, who, on paying a visit to his old friend, was induced to remain with him and join him in the good work. Also, soon after the arrival of M. Ferret, two other like-minded men came and attached themselves to M. d'Alet, and rendered him great service. These were M. d'Angiers and M. Ragot, the latter of whom became M. d'Alet's chief archdeacon. Besides the assistance which M. d'Alet received from these three helpers, he did not scruple to enlist the services of six Jesuits, in order to carry on with vigour the work of reformation. These men were natives of the province, and could, therefore, speak its language, which was difficult for a stranger to understand. Although M. d'Alet's experience of the Jesuits was an unhappy one, obliging him ultimately to break off all

connection with them, in justice to them it must be confessed, that, for a period of five or six years, the services of these men, in furthering the good work which the bishop had so much at heart, were invaluable. He had usually four, and sometimes six, working in the diocese; their orders were to visit every parish, and remain as long as they found it necessary to instruct the inhabitants in the first principles of religion and the rules of Christian living. They were enjoined to pay particular attention to establishing morning and evening prayer in every family household, and they also adopted means to provide for the necessities of the poor and the relief of the sick. In all these endeavours they laboured with praiseworthy zeal, and their efforts were greatly assisted by the docility of the people, and their readiness to do all that was required of them. The success which attended these efforts to remedy the disorders which had overwhelmed this country exceeded every expectation. In a comparatively short time the face of the diocese became wholly changed; the mild and gentle influence of holy example, accompanied with the firm rule and watchful care of an earnest-minded Christian prelate, began to be felt with all its attendant blessings. One of the means which contributed in no small degree to this desirable end, was the use of public penance in the case of scandalous sinners, which was adopted by M. d'Alet at the suggestion and with the counsel of the Jesuits, as the best means of preventing relapses into sin. The effects of these public penances were marvellous; the shame and disgrace of public exposure had a powerful influence in restraining the licence of those who were habituated to evil practices, and in restoring order throughout the whole of the diocese. These Jesuits were, during this period, greatly attached to M. d'Alet; he had a room specially appropriated for their use in the bishop's palace, which was called "the Jesuits' apartment;" he ac-

corded to them the honourable and sole duty of preaching the Advent and Lent sermons throughout the diocese. When any matter of business called him from home, it was his custom usually to lodge with them, whenever it happened that they had an establishment in the town where he was staying; and they esteemed him so highly that they frequently requested him to give instructions to their novices, by whom he was much beloved.

This happy union, which continued for a period of from five to six years, was at length marred by a circumstance which took place during the Lent of the year 1647. In order to establish uniformity of teaching and practice among his clergy, M. d'Alet had given to each of them written instructions on various matters connected with their ministry; for instance, the order which they should follow in their discourses, rules for Confession and the Holy Communion, cases in which absolution should be delayed, and those in which it must be refused, rules relating to Christian discipline and regulation of life and manners. Besides this, all these various points were enlarged upon by M. d'Alet, and made clear to his clergy, at a private conference which he held with each of them during the few days they passed at Alet before proceeding to their stations, at which he resolved all their doubts and removed their difficulties. Up to this time, the Jesuits had followed with docility and obedience his written instructions, but it happened that one of them, upon whom the duty devolved of delivering a course of sermons at St. Paul, one of the chief towns of the diocese, during the Lent of 1647, little accustomed to be controlled by rules—except those of the association of which he was a member—paid no attention to them, and went so far as to employ the opportunity of his last sermon in declaiming with some vehemence against those he disapproved of, and especially against the one which related to the delay of ab-

solution ; and without shewing any respect for that wholesome discipline of the Church which it was M. d'Alet's anxious desire to have re-established, delivered from the pulpit the most opposite sentiments in harmony with the corrupt ideas of a relaxed age, which had thrown off all the checks and restraints by which the Church of Christ had in better times endeavoured to curb the license of the wicked, and preserve the purity of Christian life and manners. "To defer absolution," said he, "when a sinner asks for it, is a harsh and persecuting measure ; it will only embarrass him, throw him into despair, and drive him away from the Church's pale." Very different were the sentiments of M. d'Alet. The power and authority for absolving sinners, with which Christ invested the priesthood, he felt, must not be lightly or rashly exercised. His love for souls, and earnest desire for their salvation, forbade him extending this benefit to the impenitent, which would be but a mockery ; and, out of truest charity, he prohibited it to those unconvinced of sin ; nor could he, before he was persuaded of their sincere and genuine conversion to God, pronounce peace to them in His Name. To do otherwise would be to reverse the order of the Church, which has never accorded this benefit of reconciliation until sufficient proof has been shown of the fitness of the recipient for so great a blessing,—one that must ever be sought by many sighs and tears, by the broken and contrite heart, accompanied with the outward evidence of works meet for repentance.

Upon being informed of the proceedings of this Jesuit preacher at St. Paul, M. d'Alet wrote to his Provincial, complaining that if any defect had been found in the rules of his diocese, it was to the bishop that he ought to have addressed his complaint. To this letter M. d'Alet received no reply, and he therefore ceased to make any further application for the assistance of Jesuit preachers, and shortly after-

wards refused his authority to two of them, who had fled from the town of Carcassonne, which was being ravaged by the pestilence, and had taken refuge in Sournia, a small town in the diocese of Alet, and had made application for permission to exercise ministerial functions. Though aware of the smallness of the town, for which its vicar and curate were amply sufficient, they were alarmed at the consequence that might result, from this refusal, to other members of their body who might afterwards seek for like permission to officiate in that diocese, and applied to one of their chiefs who had a great esteem for M. d'Alet, to write to him a letter of remonstrance. Consequently, M. d'Alet received a long letter, bitterly complaining that he should refuse the Jesuit permission to preach in his diocese. M. d'Alet replied that he had good ground to complain of the conduct of the last he had engaged, who had preached at St. Paul ; and although he had written to his Provincial he had received no answer which led him to fear that a change had taken place in their feelings towards him, and that henceforth, instead of edifying, their preaching would counteract his efforts for good. He added, that if anything reprehensible had been discovered in his conduct, the order of charity demanded that he should first have been apprized of it, before being publicly condemned from the pulpit ; that he was ready to instruct them and explain any difficulties they might find in the rules which he believed it right to adopt for the good order of his Church ; and with regard to the two Jesuits at Sournia, besides that parish being in no need of their assistance, he had reason to apprehend some irregularity in their conduct.

Notwithstanding the trouble and annoyance which the Jesuits thus caused M. d'Alet, he still continued to treat them with kindness and affection, and visits were exchanged between them, until a circumstance took place which caused

a permanent estrangement on their part. It happened thus : M. d'Alet being one day at Toulouse, where he had gone to pay them a visit, they asked him to ordain one of their number who was destined for a foreign mission. After making the customary examination of the young man, and being perfectly satisfied with his fitness and capabilities and right disposition, he willingly consented to their request ; but, as it was irregular for a bishop to confer orders except at the four sacred seasons—which from the very earliest times have been appointed by the Church for this purpose, and made days of prayer and fasting—it was necessary to have special permission in writing from the chief spiritual authority, without which such an *ex-tempora* ordination would be unlawful. He, therefore, asked to see the permission with which he supposed they had provided themselves. Instead, however, of such a document, which they had not considered necessary, they brought him a printed book containing an account of various bulls favourable to their society, among which they pointed out one permitting their members, in case of urgency, to be ordained out of the times appointed by the Church. The bishop replied with gentleness, that printed bulls of that description, unaccompanied with any of the usual formalities requisite to insure their execution, were not sufficient to authorise a bishop to confer orders contrary to the canons, and that it was absolutely necessary to have a permission in proper form, without which it was impossible for him to perform this service for them. The Jesuits, deeply offended at this refusal, broke off indignantly all further intercourse with M. d'Alet, and ceased from that time to meet him, as they were accustomed to do, whenever he visited their neighbourhood. They came no more to see him, and even altered the route taken by their young professors when making their accustomed pilgrimages, not permitting them any longer to pass through

the town of Alet. This estrangement, however, had no effect in altering M. d'Alet's kindly disposition towards them ; an enemy to all bitterness, his goodness of heart led him to seek every occasion to give them proof of his unaltered affection.

CHAPTER V.


M. d'Alet establishes a School for the training of young men for the Ministry—his careful selection of candidates—opposition of his Metropolitan—large accession of helpers—description of the conferences of the clergy—parochial lectures—uniformity of teaching throughout the diocese—frequent and familiar intercourse of the clergy with their bishop.



D'ALET soon perceived that the reform, thus happily begun in his diocese, in order that it might become solid and permanent in its character, required the labours of a numerous body of earnest-minded and evangelical clergy. From those who had charge of the parishes, when he first arrived, whose manners and habits have been described, little could be hoped, although out of fear of their new overseer they had somewhat reformed their manners, and had begun to apply themselves to their duties, and he hoped that a sincere reformation might relieve him of the necessity of replacing them by others. Accordingly he tried every means to promote this object, treating them with the greatest kindness and consideration, and carefully avoiding any allusion to the irregularities of their past lives, although he had been fully informed of all. But he found that the conversion of a bad priest is a circumstance of rare occurrence, and the change which is produced by the fear or influence of man is not likely to be a permanent one. He therefore wrote to his friends in all directions soliciting their assistance to procure for him men of right dispositions and evangelical piety to labour with him in his work of reform.

The result of these applications brought him, in the first instance, two devoted men, one of whom undertook the

direction of a school which he had formed for training young men for the ministry. None were admitted to this school but those he had himself selected, and in whom he discovered indications of a fitness for the sacred calling. They were instructed in Latin, together with the other clergy who were altogether ignorant of this language; a sufficient subsistence was provided for the students; and the advantages which this college offered, in a short time attracted large numbers from far and near. To aid in forming a body of devoted and well instructed clergy, the next step which M. d'Alet took was to establish a seminary in his own house for the training and teaching of the younger members of his clergy already in orders, and those who were sent to him from a distance. Over this seminary he placed M d'Angiers his grand vicar. All that were admitted to this seminary had first to undergo a strict examination before the bishop, but which had reference more to the state of heart and disposition than to any mental acquirements, for M. d'Alet knew well that great talents and a comprehensive information do not always contribute to the formation of a good and useful labourer in Christ's vineyard. He was satisfied with men of ordinary capacities, provided they possessed the essential requisites of sincerity, zeal, and sound common sense. These young men were maintained at the expense of M. d'Alet, until qualified to begin active duty in any part of the diocese where they might be sent. This was a great undertaking, and it cost M. d'Alet much time and pains. He hoped much from the future labours of these young men, he watched over them with great solicitude, and instructed them himself, and obtained by this means a body of men fitted to perform with diligence and fidelity the functions of ministers of the Gospel. Notwithstanding, however, the care he took in the choice and selection of applicants, he was sometimes

deceived and put to great trouble in consequence. These difficulties were chiefly caused by those who came from a distance to seek the benefit of his instructions. Many of these applicants were provided with excellent testimonials of character from their bishops or other chief ecclesiastical authorities of their neighbourhood. They proved so deceptive that he ceased to attach any value to them, unless confirmed by private enquiries made in the neighbourhood from whence they originated. Five or six of these ecclesiastics caused him great trouble: some of them he refused to ordain, and the rest he suspended. The latter made an application to the Court of Rome for protection, and for a reversal of the bishop's sentence against them. Those also to whom he had refused orders obtained from Rome licences to be ordained, notwithstanding, upon the titles procured by them in other dioceses. These irregularities were a source of great uneasiness to M. d'Alet, and he besought his old friend M. Ferret to write to the chief of the "Congregation of the Mission," then staying in Rome, to obtain redress. The application was successful, and a promise was obtained that no countenance should henceforth be given to any of those whom M. d'Alet (whose zeal and piety were well known) had refused to ordain. These promises, however, did not save him from much subsequent trouble which  arose from the opposition of his Metropolitan, the Archbishop of Narbonne, from whom he might naturally have expected his chief countenance and support; and it will appear in the sequel that the chief opposition to all his endeavours for good which he had to encounter proceeded from this source.

M. d'Alet's applications for help soon brought him a valuable accession of earnest workers, several of whom were sent by M. Vincent, with whom he maintained an affectionate intercourse, informing him from time to time of

all his wants. Among those who at this time gathered round M. d'Alet, was M. Maurice, Canon of Saintes. He was possessed of several valuable livings, and was led to Alet by the desire of benefitting by the advice and instructions of its good bishop. Deeply impressed by his teaching and example, he relinquished his livings, retaining but one. Many other persons from every quarter arrived at Alet, desirous of placing themselves under the direction of M. d'Alet, and to aid him in his apostolical labours. With this strong reinforcement, the work of reformation made rapid progress. Encouraged by the success which had attended the meetings of the clergy, which M. d'Alet termed his conferences, he turned his attention to the object of extending their usefulness and rendering their organization as perfect as possible. He regarded these conferences as the source of all the good he hoped to affect, and in order that the people might derive the greatest advantage from them, he ordered that the result of their discussions should form the subject of the sermons to be preached in every parish throughout the diocese on all Sundays and festivals throughout the year. The subjects for discussion he selected himself, and drew up a programme of the proceedings which were to occupy the consideration of the clergy at these conferences. The questions to be studied were written out and sent to each of the six districts of the diocese one month previous to the meetings, so as to give time for their full consideration. Written answers were brought by each curé to the conference, and after being read out were handed to the rural dean, who presided, and were by him forwarded to the bishop, who was thus enabled to judge of the proficiency of his clergy. At the conclusion of the conference, the bishop's own replies to the questions under consideration were then read to the meeting, a printed copy was given to

each curé, with an order to make each of the questions the subject of their sermons during the following month, and to treat them in the same manner in which they had been determined at the conference. It was thus that M. d'Alet instructed the whole of his people by the mouths of his clergy ; and according to the arrangement we have described, both the subject and substance of every discourse was the same in every church in the diocese on every Sunday and festival throughout the year, and by this means the whole body of Christian doctrine, and a perfect system of Christian teaching, was insured to the people. This admirable plan of pastoral instruction was continued by M. d'Alet to the end of his life.

One of his early difficulties was caused by the endeavour to impress his clergy with the duty of withholding absolution from the impenitent, and of delaying it in cases wherein due preparation had not been made ; and it was urgent that the Confessors should understand their duty in this respect without delay, in order to accustom the people to the true nature of Church discipline, of which they were quite ignorant. Matters purely ecclesiastical, and which formed no part of pastoral teaching, were treated separately at the conferences, so that the clergy might be instructed in everything pertaining to their state and office. The parochial lectures, which were given systematically in every parish, were attended with great success. The mode of conveying religious instruction at these lectures was by question and answer, and, in order that the most ignorant, and those dull of comprehension, might receive full advantage from them, these questions were often repeated three or four times over. They were put direct to the assembly, and answers were freely returned by the rich as well as the poor, for all classes attended these meetings. The magistrates and gentry, entering into the designs of their bishop, led the example in

attending these conferences, and cheerfully took part in the proceedings. A short address was given by the curé at the close, in which the subject under discussion was treated, by way of application to the needs of the hearers. The blessing of God was abundantly bestowed upon this method of instruction, and was visible in the good fruit that resulted. Many hearts were touched, numbers became sincerely penitent, and confessed that they had never hitherto approached the Holy Sacrament with those dispositions of heart and soul which they had been taught, and which they were convinced were necessary for a worthy partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord. Many confessed that they were not in a fit state to receive absolution, and needed time for preparation, and though feeling the burden of their sins, they could not seek the benefit of absolution, until they had confessed their sins to God, and pursued a course of penitential exercises and self-examination.

M. d'Alet spared no pains to maintain the spirit of these conferences, and to make them as edifying as possible. They became a source of great good, and were the means of diffusing the light of Truth throughout the diocese. He selected the ablest men he could find to preside over them, and arranged for them to visit the various parishes for that purpose. Twice in the year he visited each of the six districts into which he had divided his diocese, to make a personal inspection of the religious state of all the parishes. During these visits he held an interview with every clergyman in the diocese, received their statements, decided any matters of difficulty they had to submit to him, and gave them his counsel and advice. His willingness in always lending a ready ear to the accounts of their troubles, his clear judgment, and the patience with which he listened to their complaints, won their esteem and affection. There were, nevertheless, some from whom he continued to meet

with opposition. Unaccustomed to yield obedience to any superior, they resisted the authority of the bishop, and treated him with insolence and disdain. To their abusive language he would only reply by fixing upon them a look of deep concern, which always had the effect of silencing them. Finding that they absented themselves from the conferences of the clergy without sufficient reason, he issued an ordonnance compelling their attendance under heavy penalties. Three of these refractory clergy, secretly aided by their friends, appealed to their Metropolitan, the Archbishop of Narbonne, whom they knew to be unfavourably disposed towards their bishop. Deeply afflicted by this opposition to the rules which he was endeavouring to establish for the welfare of the Church and of his people, he committed his cause to Him who judgeth right, believing that He Who had inspired him with the design of undertaking this work for His glory, and Who had so visibly accompanied it with His blessing, would sustain him until it was accomplished. While fervently praying for His help in this difficulty, a circumstance occurred which might have brought these three unruly clergymen into serious trouble and disgrace, but for the kind and forgiving charity of their bishop. A servant of one of them having stolen some money belonging to his master, they resolved to take the law into their own hands, and all three beat him so unmercifully that his life was despaired of. He fortunately recovered, and M. d'Alet, touched with their contrition, instead of causing them to be punished, kept the matter secret. Won by such disinterested kindness, they desisted from any further opposition, and withdrew their appeal.

These undertakings, which occupied so much thought and time, did not prevent M. d'Alet inquiring into the state of the sick and poor of his diocese and concerting measures for their relief. For this purpose, he engaged the services

of several pious women, to whom he assigned the duty of distributing bread, meat, and soup to those who were in great need. He also visited them in person whenever his occupations allowed him to do so, and if unable to go himself he would send one of his ecclesiastics to see them and bring him back a report of their state and necessities. One day, while walking through the streets of Alet, he observed a poor man lying at the corner of a street upon a heap of straw, apparently in a dying condition. He bade his servant bring a mattress for the poor man ; the servant informed him that there were so few as to be insufficient for the wants of his own household. "Then," said he, "go and bring him mine, for I cannot leave him in this state."

CHAPTER VI.

Establishes a system of regular visitations—order of proceedings of an episcopal visit—expenses of these visits, how defrayed—his great frugality—town versus country—episcopal visits increase in frequency—incident—the pass of Lesplandy—intrepidity—sets an example of activity—famine—superstition of the country people—impending murder of thirty women charged with witchcraft—the bishop sets off to their rescue—dangerous journey in a snow storm—a night journey to administer the Sacrament.



AFTER M. d'Alet had travelled over the whole of his diocese, and made himself fully acquainted with its position and circumstances, his next step was to begin a system of general visitations to every parish in turn, with a view of giving a permanency to the reform which had been so happily begun. In order to impress the people with due respect and reverence for holy things, the proceedings connected with these visits were invested with all the dignity and solemnity possible. The bishop was accompanied on these occasions by five or six of his principal clergy. His chaplain, who had been sent on beforehand to investigate the state of the parish which was about to receive the episcopal visit, duly informed the bishop of the prevalent abuses, and of all other matters which would have to be brought before him judicially. The day of the bishop's arrival was announced to the people by previous notice, and was invested with all the solemnity and importance of a high festival; nothing was spared to render the event striking and impressive; few were absent on the occasion, and none who desired a hearing were refused, while every matter connected with the well-being of the parish was carefully looked into. Th

usually occupied several days. At the morning sitting, the proceedings commenced with the celebration of the Holy Communion by the bishop himself in the presence of all the people, after which, sitting in the midst of the sanctuary, and surrounded by his attendant clergy, he delivered an exhortation, taking his text from the gospel for the day or the previous Sunday, aptly suiting his discourse to the subjects of his visit. Between the sittings, the clergy were occupied in visiting the dwellings of the people. They were careful to ascertain whether family prayer was duly practised, for which purpose M. d'Alet had composed a form which had been distributed throughout the diocese; also whether the services of the Church were regularly attended. They also advised with them on all matters relating to the religious training of their families; abuses were corrected; dissentients were reconciled; the obstinate were brought before the bishop, and seldom was the last resort ineffectual. Before the charm of his influence, all resentment gave way, and he seldom failed in restoring peace. But his greatest difficulty was in dealing with the usurious practices of the people. This was a vice which had taken deep root in the diocese of Alet; during his early visits he could make no impression upon it, and it was only after time and labour had been expended, that he at last succeeded in bringing the people to observe the law of the Church in this matter.

The last day of these visitations was attended with peculiar solemnity. After a short exhortation, the bishop's chaplain summed up in brief the result of the several days' proceedings; then, approaching the bishop, he presented his report, describing the spiritual condition of the parish, and detailing its several wants; he then spoke of the disorders and irregularities which the enquiries of the visiting clergy had brought to light, and requested the application of proper remedies in conformity with the canons of the Church. To

this the bishop replied, dwelling upon the serious evils resulting from the crimes of which several individuals had been convicted ; he then ordered that they should be brought before him to receive the order of their penance.

The solemnity of these proceedings overawed the boldest sinners ; they threw themselves at his feet, acknowledged the evils which their scandalous lives had caused, beseeching forgiveness from God and from their brethren. Thereupon the bishop imposed upon each a public penance, proportioned in severity to the nature of their crimes, and gave a strict order to the curé to see that all was duly performed, and to render him an account. No one was exempt from the reach of this discipline ; all classes were dealt with alike, from the lord of the manor to the humblest peasant upon his estate, and it was no uncommon instance to see the most considerable of the gentry, accompanied by their tenantry, throw themselves at the bishop's feet, make public confession of their disorderly lives, beseech the mercy of their pastor with tears, and submit with becoming humility to whatever reparation he should prescribe to them.

The charity of our good bishop had in it a comprehensiveness which displayed itself in his thoughtfulness and consideration for others. It is a custom, established by the canons, that the expenses of episcopal visitations are to be defrayed by the clergy of their respective parishes. Willingly would M. d'Alet have dispensed with this custom, so as to make no inroad upon the slender resources of a poor curate, but he felt it his duty to abide by the rule of the Church in justice to the interests of his successors, who, from various reasons, might wish to follow the ancient practice. He did, however, what almost amounted to the same thing. He gave strict and precise orders to the clergy to make only the simplest provision for his wants. The following instance will serve to show the extreme frugality of his mode of

living. On the occasion of a visit to the district of Fenouillades, the curate of that parish had requested the bishop's chaplain to give him an account of the expenses which they had incurred. On making up the account—which included the bishop and his retinue, consisting of three or four ecclesiastics, three servants, four horses, and two mules—the sum amounted to no more than what was equivalent to five shillings in English money for each parish visited.

M. d'Alet very prudently postponed as long as possible his parochial visits to the two chief towns of his diocese. Though fully conscious that they stood in as great need of reform as any other part of it, he knew the difficulty of dealing with corporations, and that the adoption of severe measures, without due preparation for them, would only be losing time, would weaken his authority, and render the incorrigible more audacious. He adopted the plan of first leavening the diocese by instructing the clergy and people, diffusing the influence of holy living, and teaching the observance of Christian discipline. He believed that if once a good discipline could be established, and faithfully practised, though but by few persons at first, it would eventually lead to better things. For this reason he preferred to begin the work in the country parishes, persuaded that the reformed and regular lives of the more docile laity would react upon the clergy of the towns, and that the feeling of shame which the contrast would produce would help greatly towards a general reformation. "It would be well," said he, "that the good report of a religious revival throughout the country villages, and the good order that a bishop is establishing in them, should excite the wishes of the towns to share the same blessings, and cause them to say to their pastor, 'Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum do also here in thy country.'" (Luke iv. 23.)

The solemn visits we have described were not by any

means pleasing to M. d'Alet. His love of Christian simplicity caused him to shrink from all approach to notoriety or ostentation, and nothing but a strong sense of duty could have enabled him to overcome his repugnance to them. He undertook them as seldom as he could, and rejoiced when the gradual establishment of good habits among the people enabled him to dispense with them altogether. But it must not be supposed that when this took place there was any relaxation of vigilance ; on the contrary, his visits became more frequent, but they were devoid of ceremony. Accompanied by a single priest and a domestic servant, and at his own expense, he was continually seen among his people in every corner of his diocese, and great was the good which he thus effected. Upon his arrival at a village, his first enquiry was for the sick and poor who needed assistance ; his presence comforted them, and, while giving them spiritual instruction, he also relieved their necessities. The following incident will give an idea of his solicitude in caring for the poorest members of his flock. It happened that one day, while visiting the mountain village of D'Ayat, he heard that there was a sick person lying in a neighbouring hamlet among the hills, difficult of access, belonging to no parish, and the inhabitants of which were cut off from any ministerial succour. Our good bishop, like a faithful shepherd, instantly resolved on visiting them, and all endeavours to deter him from so hazardous a proceeding were fruitless. He felt that the more abandoned was the condition of these poor outcasts the greater was the need that he should go and help them. Accordingly, he set out, and after some hard climbing arrived at the most dangerous part of the undertaking. This was the pass of Lesplandy ; it consists of a smooth and even rock, a little inclined from the perpendicular. The path traverses this rock, and, to prevent the foot from slipping, little notches had been cut in it. A cool

head and firm foot are needed to traverse this formidable path in safety, on which a single false step would, in all probability, precipitate the traveller into the depths below. This passage is so dangerous, that accidents of a fatal character sometimes happen even to the inhabitants of the district who are accustomed to it from their youth. Thus did this intrepid and charitable pastor risk his life to seek out the abandoned members of his flock. He found them truly neglected, simple in their manners, but profoundly ignorant. The sick person, on whose account he had penetrated into so wild a region, was a young girl who had been paralyzed from her childhood. He found her religiously disposed, talked to her, gave her some religious instruction, received her confession, and prepared her to receive the Holy Communion, which he promised to bring to her on the day following. Instead of returning to Axat, M. d'Alet proceeded to another hamlet in the mountains, which could only be reached by paths almost as dangerous as those he had traversed on the preceding day. Nothing could daunt this indefatigable pastor while in the path of duty. The precipitous rocks up which he toiled, the Holy Sacrament in his hand, the deep gorge to be crossed only upon a narrow plank, down in whose depths the river Aude might be seen foaming over its rocky bed, were obstacles formidable indeed, but insufficient to turn him aside. He trod, verily, in his great Master's footsteps, seeking his lost sheep among the mountains, and knowing well that it was not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish.

After administering the Sacrament to the sick girl, his next care was to provide some permanent spiritual succour for these remote hamlets ; and, discovering in their vicinity the remains of what formerly had been a Benedictine monastery, he erected them into a cure, and appointed a pious priest to

take charge of these mountain flocks. Careful, too, for their temporal welfare, he did not forget the pass of Lesplandy, across which he had risked his life. He caused a deep path to be cut in the rock, and a wall built along its margin, to afford safety to all future travellers.

It was his custom, while making a stay in any of the chief places in his diocese, as, for instance, at the town of Saint Paul, to visit the surrounding villages from three to six miles distant, on the Sundays and festivals. He would himself perform the service, preach, celebrate the Holy Communion, visit the sick, enquire into the state of the parish, and issue his decrees for the remedy of abuses. He caused those who had disregarded his previous injunctions to be brought to him to receive the penance he thought fit to impose upon them. In the long summer days it was his custom, in the afternoon, to visit a second parish and perform the same duties. "A bishop," said he, "ought to be the sun of his diocese, and should diffuse both warmth and heat throughout every part of it." In order to insure the due performance of these decrees, he commissioned M. Bonal, an old and experienced ecclesiastic, to visit those places where they had been issued, and invested him with episcopal authority to see them duly enforced. M. Bonal had the talent to overcome the opposition which some of the curés made to a delegated authority. The resistance which he met with from one of the principal gentry caused him great trouble. This gentleman, opposing the execution of one of the bishop's decrees, M. Bonal caused his pew to be removed from the chancel to the nave of the church. Greatly irritated at this indignity in the presence of the congregation, he overwhelmed M. Bonal with a torrent of abuse, and did not spare even the bishop in his invectives. Very shortly after this occurrence this gentleman fell sick, and expired after a short illness of eight days. This was looked upon by all

as an act of Divine Providence, and greatly strengthened the bishop's authority.

Besides the episcopal visits which were made by M. d'Alet, he was always ready to set out at a moment's notice to any part of the diocese where his presence might be required. It must be borne in mind that the country around Alet was mountainous and rugged, the roads were bad, and the modern facilities for travelling unknown ; while some of the villages in the mountain wilds could only be reached at considerable risk. None of these difficulties ever stopped our persevering bishop when occasion called him. It happened that the harvest of 1643 proved very deficient in the south of France, and there was a famine in consequence. The parish of Capsir, on the frontiers of Spain, was one of those that suffered most severely. It is always observable that wherever ignorance and superstition prevail, designing persons are always to be found to impose upon the credulity of the people. This was the case to a great extent at this period in Alet and the neighbouring districts, and a number of impostors, to whom the people gave the name of conjurors or sorcerers, had been apprehended by the civil power, and brought to Toulouse to be disposed of by the parliament, and this matter became the subject of general conversation. The inhabitants of Capsir were seized with the notion that the scarcity they were suffering from had been occasioned by these conjurors, in consequence of which they sent a deputation of four persons to an individual who resided in the neighbourhood of Carcassonne, who had the credit of possessing occult powers. The promise of one hundred crowns induced him to return with them to Capsir. Upon their arrival, this wicked impostor required that all the families in the place should pass in review before him. His commands were implicitly obeyed, and as the inhabitants of that locality marched past, he

singled out thirty-two women whom he accused of witchcraft. They were immediately conducted before the chief bailiff, and consigned to prison, under guard of a number of young fellows, of worthless character, who had armed themselves with all kinds of weapons. Thus, without any form of trial, were these poor women, belonging to five neighbouring parishes, dealt with by this ignorant bailiff, and the only question was what description of torture to apply to them. So great was the popular excitement, that the curé of the district strove in vain to calm the people and bring them to reason. In despair, he despatched a messenger to the Curé of Rouze, the rural dean, a pious and prudent man, who no sooner heard the state of matters than he instantly set out to Alet to inform the bishop of what had taken place, believing that his presence alone could prevent the carnage that was about to ensue. The bishop having heard the account, and perceiving at once that no time was to be lost, and that a moment's delay might be attended with disastrous consequences, set off instantly in the rain and snow, without giving time for any of his ecclesiastics to prepare themselves to accompany him. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the bishop left Alet. He was joined the next day by two of his clergy, who had left early on the following morning, and who found him at the little hamlet of Condons, in which a miserable inn afforded the only lodging, and which was filled with the poor peasantry of the neighbourhood, who had come in for warmth and shelter. They found the good bishop in the midst of these people, catechising them as he warmed himself at the same hearth. The following morning brought no better weather, the wind blew with increased fury, and the snow fell thickly. The peasantry who had lodged with M. d'Alet during the night represented to him the impossibility of facing such a tempest. Their remonstrances were fruitless ; it was necessary at all

hazards to press on, and, therefore, selecting one of the hardiest of these mountaineers for a guide, M. d'Alet resumed his journey. They passed through a wood which afforded them some shelter, but no sooner had they emerged upon the open plain than they encountered a whirlwind of snow, which took away their breath and blinded them. The guide, although one of the best in the whole district, lost courage, and, returning to M. d'Alet, whom he had preceded a few paces, said to him, "My lord, you will most assuredly be lost; as for myself, I am quite exhausted, and can accompany you no further." So saying, he left the bishop and returned. Upon this, M. d'Alet, addressing the Curé of Rouze, asked him if he had courage sufficient to undertake the service of guide. "Yes, my lord," said he, "I will conduct you wherever you wish to go." The bishop then turned to the two clergymen who had joined him from Alet, and requested them to return; but they would not leave their bishop, saying to each other, in the words of St. Thomas, "Let us also go that we may die with him." (John xi. 16.) "There is not the same necessity for you to expose yourselves to this danger," returned M. d'Alet, "and I therefore insist upon your proceeding no further." Upon this he gave them his benediction and bade them adieu. He now resumed his journey, in spite of the wind and snow, which continued with unabated violence, accompanied by the brave Curé of Rouze, and two of his domestic servants—strong and vigorous young men. All trace of the way was lost, and they would infallibly have plunged into an abyss which the snow hid from their view, had not a peasant from a neighbouring village observed them taking a wrong direction, and ran after them to warn them of their danger. After crossing the plain, the road enters a difficult country, and in some places is not more than a foot in width, bordering the edge of torrents, and traversing the sides of precipices of

profound depth. Such being the nature of the road, the travellers could only proceed at a snail's pace, picking their way at every step. They consequently occupied two whole days in reaching Rouze, although the distance was but twelve miles, and they arrived at length, spent with fatigue. On the following morning they resumed their journey, marching on foot, in consequence of the snow which continued to fall, making the paths they would have to traverse too dangerous for horses. Several strong peasants from Rouze preceded them to clear the way and to assist them in surmounting the difficult pass of the Col des Arres,—a defile between two mountains which separates the parish of Bonazan from that of Capsir. It was at this time filled up with snow. So formidable an obstacle to further progress taxed all their powers of strength and endurance; they scarcely hoped to get the good bishop through, who was by this time half dead with fatigue. He was supported on either side by his two servants, strong and vigorous youths; they lifted him out of the recesses which the snow concealed from view, and into which he stumbled at every step, and gave him a little wine to revive him from the faintness into which he sank exhausted from time to time. But nothing could daunt his courage, and no sooner on these occasions did he feel a little restored, than he encouraged his companions to renewed efforts:—"Blessed be God," said he, "I am much better; let us hasten on." At last, after incredible labour and perseverance, their journey's end was reached, and at four o'clock in the afternoon they arrived in the village of Capsir. Without losing an instant, M. d'Alet proceeded to the house of the bailiff, with whom the so-called sorcerer was staying. He demanded of him who he was and what business had brought him there. Receiving but a confused reply, M. d'Alet assumed that stern, commanding tone, by which the boldest characters were fre-

quently overawed. Then, addressing the bailiff, he gave him strict injunctions to secure the offender:—"I give him into your charge," said he, "you will answer to me for his safe keeping." This command was obeyed, the impostor was placed in confinement, and M. d'Alet retired to take a little rest after the fatigues of his journey.

The same evening the report of the bishop's arrival spread far and wide and produced the greatest excitement. The people came in crowds to see him, expressing their astonishment that he should have attempted such a journey in such frightful weather, and should have safely accomplished it. The following morning the pretended sorcerer was conducted into his presence; also one of the women he had accused. He was asked how he arrived at the knowledge that this woman was a sorceress. The prisoner, alarmed at the judicial nature of the proceedings, and seeing the Curé of Rouze with writing materials before him about to take down his answers, became confused, but, taking courage, he replied that the woman had a mark on her head which betrayed her, and indicated the place. On examination no such mark appeared. He then said it would be found upon her shoulder. He was again wrong,—no mark was to be found. M. d'Alet, no longer restraining his indignation, addressed him in terms so severe that the wretched man threw himself at the bishop's feet and implored him to save his life, for the people, who by this time were furious, would have torn him limb from limb on the spot, had they not been restrained by the respect they owed to their bishop. He confessed that he knew nothing of sorcery; that he was a surgeon by profession; that the people themselves had given him the reputation he possessed; and that he had taken advantage of it to obtain money. M. d'Alet thereupon committed him to the charge of the bailiff, ordered the thirty-two women to be released,

and requested that every one should attend divine service on the following day. On the morrow, long before the time of service, crowds had filled the church, having hastened from all the neighbouring villages to see their bishop and witness the proceedings. The thirty-two women accused of witchcraft were placed on one side of the church and their accuser on the other. The bishop made a stirring exhortation to the people on the subject of his visit, after which the pretended sorcerer stood forth and in a loud voice declared that he had imposed upon the people; he asked forgiveness of the accused and of the people, and he prayed God to forgive him. He then received the public penance from the bishop, and was given in charge to the bailiff.


Before leaving home, M. d'Alet had taken the precaution to despatch a messenger to the Governor of Perpignan for a sufficient constabulary force to act in case of need. A detachment was accordingly sent, which, arriving at this juncture, took charge of the prisoner and conveyed him away to be tried and punished. Thus did this faithful pastor accomplish his mission of mercy, in spite of all the toil and danger that stood in the way, and after bringing back to their senses an infatuated people, he left them at peace, and on his departure they loaded him with blessings. He returned by short and easy stages to Alet, where, during his absence, public prayers had been offered up unceasingly for his safety.

Another instance may be given of the self-sacrificing spirit of this good bishop in his paternal care for his people. In a mountain hamlet, about three miles distant from Alet, a poor woman lay dying. The curé being absent, her husband posted off to Alet for a priest to come and administer the last sacraments. It was late in the evening when he arrived at the vicar's residence. The snow was falling thickly and the roads were almost impassable. The vic

who felt very much indisposed to set out at that hour and in face of such weather, replied that he had already seen the poor woman that morning, when he had confessed her, and did not consider her case to be so urgent as to require him to set off that night. The poor man in despair betook himself to the episcopal residence and knocked at the door. It was just ten o'clock, and the household had retired to rest. M. d'Angiers having been informed by the porter what was wanted, rose immediately and went into M. d'Alet's room for the keys, where, every evening, they were deposited. The noise of some one stirring about awoke the good bishop, who, starting up, enquired what was the matter. Being informed of the circumstance which had disturbed the household, he immediately rose and prepared to set out, "for," said he, "the curé being absent and the vicar refusing, it became his duty, as chief pastor, to go and aid a suffering member of his flock." He accordingly set out, accompanied by an ecclesiastic and two of his domestic servants, and in the dark tempestuous night, through the miry mountain roads, carrying the blessed Sacrament in his hand, did this faithful pastor sacrifice his sleep and rest to succour and comfort the dying. He arrived, however, too late,—the poor woman had expired before he could reach her, but he found in the same hamlet some other sick people and occupied the night in visiting them, administering the Sacrament to a dying man. It was five o'clock the next morning when he arrived back again at the palace. It was thus that this holy and self-denying prelate inspired his clergy with zeal and devotion. He taught them the path of duty by his instructions; he showed them how to walk in it by his example.

CHAPTER VII.

Annual synod of the clergy—the holy oil—order of proceedings—close intimacy between bishop and clergy—occasions of special united prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—missions in the diocese—revivals—the bishop's care for the **TEMPORAL** well-being of his flock—distributes clothing, tools, implements, &c.—promotes marriages.—Of sins venial and mortal.—Necessity of a genuine conversion of the heart to God.

FROM the commencement of his episcopate, M. d'Alet made a rule to hold every year a synod of his clergy. At these synods he distributed to them the holy oil, and instructed them in all matters in which they needed their bishop's advice. Accordingly, when the time arrived, each of the clergy received an order of convocation. The rural deans, who overlooked the six cantons of the diocese, assembled at the bishop's residence a few days earlier. They conferred with him about the religious state of the diocese, and agreed upon the plan of proceedings which was to occupy the synod; also they considered what instructions were necessary to be given to each curé. The chambers in the episcopal residence being insufficient to lodge the whole of the clergy, M. d'Alet had accommodation provided for them with the citizens of the town, considering it neither fitting nor seemly that they should lodge at the inns or public houses. Each day a certain number dined with the bishop (who took care that all in turn were invited), and they went away charmed and delighted with their reception, and with the bishop's affection and cordiality.

The proceedings of the synod opened by the celebration of the Holy Communion in the cathedral of Alet. This was

succeeded by a discourse from the bishop on the duties of moderation, silence, and the influence of a holy example ; after which the hour was signified when the synod should commence its sittings in the bishop's private chapel. When all were assembled, the bishop delivered a lengthened address on the duties of pastors, strongly urging the necessity of personal holiness, and describing the power and influence of a devoted life as being one of the chief and most efficacious means for the conversion of the people. He urged upon them the obligation they were under to be always at their posts, and not to be absent from their parishes,—the continual presence of a watchful pastor having a powerful influence in keeping the disorderly in check,—and many evils were sure to be engendered in his absence. He concluded his discourse by very earnestly impressing upon them the duty of cultivating an habitual communion with God, by unceasing prayer, as the only means of obtaining His blessing upon their labours, and of drawing down rich measures of grace upon the souls which the Chief Shepherd had entrusted to their care, and of whom they would have to render an account at the last great day.

It was by such earnest appeals as these that M. d'Alet gained the hearts of his clergy. They felt they were listening to one who was really in earnest, and whose heart and soul were in his work. The hardest hearts became softened under his influence, and were drawn to him by the charm of his teaching ; his gentleness melted them, and the solemnity of his manner filled them with reverence. There were a few individuals among his clergy whose titles M. d'Alet did not approve of. These were the prebends of St. Paul, who held their cures through an indulgence from Rome. These, however, he did not exclude from the synod, but he refused to admit them to the profession of faith which all the other clergy made to the bishop at its conclusion. The second

day's sitting was wholly occupied by the private conversations between the bishop and his clergy. He listened to the account of their difficulties, and to the cases of conscience they had to submit to him, with a patience truly admirable, and never was there greater need for the exercise of this grace. He considered this second day's employment as the most trying of all, having to deal with so many classes of minds and dispositions, and finding it often exceedingly difficult to discover their real meaning from the confused manner in which they expressed themselves. Never was the discretion, the discernment, and paternal kindness of M. d'Alet more conspicuous than on these trying occasions, when he entered into all the wants and sympathised with all the troubles of every individual among his clergy. He consoled the desponding, by telling them not to be discouraged if they saw no apparent fruit from their labours; that results were in the hands of God, who reserved them for Himself, all that He required of His servants being their patient labours, solicitude, and application. Those who applied themselves faithfully and earnestly to their duties he sustained and strengthened. He besought the careless and lukewarm with the most urgent entreaties to reflect seriously upon their lives, and in the most affectionate terms, and often with tears in his eyes, he conjured them to yield themselves to God. Few were able to resist such tender appeals, and the hardest hearts were touched by them. He recommended his clergy to avoid mixing too much with their parishioners; that undue familiarity gave them the opportunity to observe and criticise all the little defects of character in their pastors, and they would readily seize upon them as an excuse for their own.

These interviews being ended, the Promoteur then made a statement of all the abuses which had come to his knowledge, and of the complaints which had been made to hi

against any of the clergy. All were permitted to speak in their defence, and, after all was concluded, the statutes, which were considered necessary for the requirements of the diocese, were drawn up and agreed to.

The last day of the synod opened with the celebration of the Holy Communion in the chapel of the bishop's palace, in memory of all the clergy in the diocese who had died during the year; afterwards the agents and deputies were nominated, who were to be charged with the duty of attending to the temporalities of the see during the ensuing year. To prevent altercations, these were all nominated by the bishop himself, who selected the most capable, and the assembly ratified his choice. He then took an affectionate leave of all, and exhorted them in the most touching manner to practise with fidelity all they had resolved upon, and with this the proceedings of the synod terminated.

Thus far we have attempted to describe the means adopted by this admirable bishop to diffuse the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the length and breadth of his diocese, and to kindle the faith of his people; first by the missionaries from the institution of St. Lazarre; by the assistance of the Jesuits; and, lastly, by a band of devoted clergy gathered around him from all quarters. And one might well imagine that these missionary labours, visits, and conferences, would have been all that was necessary to effect the object that M. d'Alet had so much at heart,—the revival of true religion in his diocese; but, notwithstanding all his care and labour, he was grieved to find that there were many persons in the country parishes who were still ignorant of the very rudiments of the Christian faith. He found it necessary to redouble his exertions, and in his renewed efforts to evangelize his people he allowed himself no interval of repose. But it must not be supposed that what had been done so far had borne no fruit. A marked

change for the better had overspread the face of the diocese; good order and respect for religion everywhere prevailed; and even those who were secretly opposed to the new state of things, restrained by motives of fear and respect, durst not openly exhibit any opposition. The public houses were deserted, the usurious practises which had so generally prevailed when M. d'Alet first arrived had in a great measure ceased, the few who still engaged in them were obliged to conceal themselves, public scandals had become less frequent, and the godly discipline of primitive times (the restoration of which in our own branch of the Church Catholic, as declared in one of the offices in our Book of Common Prayer, "is much to be wished,") was in full vigour. But the work was not accomplished; this was but the beginning of a new era, and M. d'Alet felt that a solid and permanent good could only be maintained by a continual growth and progress which demanded untiring exertions.

Among other means which he adopted for the furtherance of this great object was the appointing seasons of special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He knew that such solemn seasons had a great influence upon the people, were fruitful in the conversion of the ungodly, and in reviving and invigorating the faith of the true and sincere follower of Christ. These revival meetings were conducted as follows: A solemn mission was undertaken to one of the six divisions of the diocese; each were visited in turn. The company who were entrusted with this enterprise consisted of about forty ecclesiastics, selected by the bishop, some of whom came from Paris, Toulouse, and other places for this special purpose, also the most able of the clergy of the diocese, particularly those who were specially gifted for doing the work of the evangelist. The bishop took care that in their temporary absence their parish duties should be provided for. Before proceeding to the scene of their labours they held a pre-

paratory meeting, during which M. d'Alet gave to each individual precise instructions as to the order of proceedings. He also issued an order for special prayers to be offered up throughout the whole of the diocese, for the blessing of God upon the enterprise. He also drew up some brief meditations, suitable to touch the hearts of the faithful and excite their piety. To the clergy of the various parishes intended to be visited he sent a letter of instructions, advising them how to prepare their parishioners for the visitation. The expenses incurred by these missions he himself defrayed, and gave a considerable sum besides, which was dispensed in alms to the sick and needy.

The hour of departure having arrived, this company of evangelists assembled at the bishop's residence, and after listening to a brief but earnest exhortation they received his benediction, and set out each to the place assigned to them in the district to be visited. The bishop followed, and stationed himself in the centre of the scene of action, the various members of the mission pursuing their labours in the surrounding villages. He was thus within easy reach of any who might require to consult him, and from whence he could conveniently hasten to any quarter where his presence might be required. The work occupied from a fortnight to three weeks. Nothing could exceed the joy of the peasantry when they heard of the arrival of their chief pastor; they came to him in crowds from all quarters to show their gratitude, and returned delighted to have seen him, his very presence being sufficient to inspire them with the sentiments of religion. These missions were opened with great solemnity. The first week was occupied with two daily services, which were held one in the morning and the other in the evening, at both of which a long and instructive discourse was given. The rest of the day was employed in visiting the various families, each of which had previously

received notice of the hour they would be called upon, so that all the household, the children and domestics included, might be assembled on the occasion. After a short prayer, which was offered in every house, enquiries were then made into the habits of the family, and all needful counsel given, even to the minutest detail, in what was deemed requisite to contribute to the peace and regularity of a well-ordered Christian household. The extreme poverty of many of these families was productive of many evils ; a very prevalent one was the practice of parents and children of both sexes sleeping together in the same bed, even when no longer young ; this was occasioned by their lack of means to purchase bedding. To remedy this, M. d'Alet had four hundred coverlets distributed amongst those who were in greatest need. In various ways, too, did this charitable pastor contribute to the temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of his flock. Many of them of both sexes were found to be living in idleness, having neither tools nor implements, nor money to purchase them. M. d'Alet had an ample supply of these procured and distributed among them. Many, too, of the young women in the diocese were affianced, but could not marry, being quite unable, on account of their poverty, to complete the few simplest necessities of a household, though the sum required for this purpose would not exceed the value of ten shillings. The charity of our kind-hearted bishop furnished numbers of them with this sum, and made them very happy. During these visitations nothing was omitted that could contribute to the peace and good order of families. The bishop selected from among the laity several pious individuals, who were also clever and intelligent men of business, to accompany him on these missions ; he employed them to aid him in terminating lawsuits which caused divisions in families, by bringing about a reasonable and amicable compromise ; cases of conscience were re

served for his ecclesiastical council, which he assembled for the purpose of deciding them. Upon any disturbance breaking out, it was his custom to despatch a trusty emissary to the place or go thither in person, his simple presence being always sufficient to calm the troubled waters of strife, for all looked up to him as to a father.

During the missionary enterprise of 1669 M. d'Alet was consulted by several of his clergy, as to the course they should take with those of their flock who had allowed sins of infirmity or surprise to become habitual. Were they in these cases to give or to withhold absolution? To this he replied, "that, be the sin what it may, absolution must only be given upon a true and genuine repentance. That absolution must be withheld from those who persist in the commission of any known sin without making any effort to amend their lives; but if a penitent, through infirmity, fall again into the same sin, and provided there is good evidence that by his sincere endeavours to resist sin his repentance be sincere, though by the force of habit he may sometimes fall, it does not seem right in such a case to refuse absolution or even to defer it, unless the individual be quite disposed to such postponement, for the sake of his spiritual advancement." It will doubtless be understood that the foregoing remarks apply only to those sins of weakness, surprise, or infirmity, which, the oftener they occur, the more they weaken the love of God in the soul which is its life; and not to those deadly sins, wilful and deliberate in their nature, which, by quenching the Spirit, forfeit His grace and separate the soul from God.

Towards the conclusion of these missionary visits, great pains were taken to instruct the people in the nature of a true and sincere repentance, and the absolute necessity of its heartfelt experience as the ground of all spiritual advancement. It required great effort to correct the false notion

prevalent among them that unless they received absolution and the Holy Sacrament during the fortnight or three weeks that the mission lasted, they would lose the grace it would otherwise bring them. It was incessantly impressed upon them that the conversion of the heart to God was the essential point without which all else were vain ; also, that as inveterate diseases are not cured in a day, so with the diseases of the soul,—a deep and lasting conversion must be the result of time and labour, of many prayers and tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the seminary of Alet—co-operation of the clergy in this work—paternal care and affection of the bishop for his clerical students—principal subjects of study—of the dignity of the priesthood—of the study of the Holy Scriptures—of the qualifications for Holy Orders in the primitive ages of the Church—on the learning fitting for a Christian minister—the true service of the Church—Christian study—predestination and grace—St. Augustine—care to be observed in administering the Holy Communion to the sick.



FOUND a seminary for the instruction and training of young men for the ministry was an object that M. d'Alet had long entertained, and which continually occupied his thoughts. It has been previously stated that at an early period he had gathered together a little band of earnest-minded young men for this purpose, the more advanced of whom were instructed by himself and his grand vicar at the episcopal residence. This was, however, but the commencement of a greater design which had yet to be expanded to its full proportions. Great difficulties stood in the way : there was no house in the town of Alet that could be obtained that was at all suitable to receive the students and their teachers. Such also was the condition of the diocese at that period that it was only with the greatest difficulty that young men of any promise could be found, and, although M. d'Alet had instructed all the clergy to seek out diligently in their several parishes young men of good dispositions and abilities, exceedingly few were found that gave any hopes of making useful clergymen. He was resolved, however, to proceed with a work so essential to the furtherance of all his endeavours for the reformation of his people, and, not content to wait until a suitable build-

ing could be obtained, he made arrangements, without further delay, with those of his clergy who were willing, to board the young men in their houses. Notice was then given in every part of the diocese, that any young man that was disposed to enter the ministry was to proceed to Alet and confer with the bishop, and that those who were unable to pay their own expenses would receive their maintenance at his expense. Very soon applications were made in numbers that exceeded the means to accommodate them.

At the commencement of this work, M. d'Alet undertook in person the instruction of these young men, who assembled daily at his residence for this purpose; but he soon found that the labour was so great as to require the whole time and attention of a person who could devote himself specially to it, and the multitude of his duties prevented him from doing this. It pleased God to remove this difficulty, by sending him a valuable assistant in M. Bonal, an ecclesiastic of Toulouse, who offered to undertake the conduct of the seminary, and applied himself to the work with great zeal and affection. The students assembled twice a day for a general instruction, which was always commenced and ended with prayer. They also attended the daily celebration of the Holy Communion in the bishop's chapel, and on Sundays and festivals listened to an exhortation from the bishop or his grand vicar. In the course of time a suitable house was obtained for the residence of these candidates for the ministry hitherto dispersed through the town, and now, living together under one roof, they formed a little community under the direction of M. Bonal. Great care was taken by M. d'Alet that this band of workers, whom he was thus training for pastors and evangelists, should consist only of those who possessed an evident calling to this high vocation; all others were dismissed. None were received above the age of eighteen or nineteen. Strangers from other

dioceses were only admitted when they brought a letter of sanction from their own bishop, and with an undertaking on their part to attach themselves solely to the diocese of Alet.

But the chief desire of M. d'Alet was to fill his seminary with young men from his own diocese, and he, therefore, watched with deep interest the progress of all those young candidates in the country parishes who were under the training of the curés. He saw them during his visits, spoke with them, questioned them to ascertain their character and disposition, and won their hearts by his gentleness and affection. They were all sent to the seminary at Alet, as soon as they were sufficiently advanced to profit by its deeper instructions, and remained there until formed and practised in the habits of a life of piety. Here, also, they were perfected in the Latin tongue, and qualified to conduct schools, which they were sent out to establish in all parts of the diocese as soon as their training was completed, all other teachers being displaced who did not possess the necessary qualifications. After being thus occupied in teaching for a prescribed time, they again returned to the seminary to undergo a year's preparation for the tonsure. During the two years they remained in the seminary they were maintained and provided for at the sole expense of the bishop; but while engaged in teaching schools this expense was borne by the parishes in which they laboured. Although M. d'Alet took great care in procuring the ablest instructors for these candidates for the ministry, he maintained, as chief director, a careful supervision, and devoted to them all the time he could spare from his other duties, in order to form them in piety and make them sound theologians. He conversed with them frequently, expounding to them portions of Holy Scripture, and enlarged upon the subjects he had prepared for their study. Besides these public and general instructions, he often talked with each of them privately,

studied their minds and character, and especially endeavoured to get at their hearts that he might judge of their vocations. Some days prior to their ordination, he redoubled his efforts to prepare them for this holy institution, dwelling very earnestly upon its nature, origin, and responsibilities. After their entrance into Holy Orders, he sent them into the parishes assigned to them, giving them, before their departure, whatever they stood in need of for their personal comforts. No father could be more loving and tender to his children than was this good bishop to these young ministers of the Gospel, who had been trained under his own eye, and never were clergy more deeply attached to their chief pastor, than were these who had been so long the objects of his care and solicitude.

It may be interesting as well as edifying to give some further account of the internal working of the seminary of Alet, of the subjects chosen for study, the doctrines which were there taught, and of the tastes and motives with which it was the constant endeavour of its founder to inspire the students. One of M. d'Alet's chief characteristics, was a deep and absorbing sense of the dignity and excellence of the Christian priesthood, established by our Lord Jesus Christ, and vested by Him, our great High Priest, in His Apostles, and their successors; and it was His endeavour to cultivate in the minds and hearts of his clergy, a deep realization of this verity. He set before them all that was calculated to foster it, and carefully removed all subjects of study that had a tendency to inflate their minds, unspiritualize them, and destroy their taste for those functions which appertain to that holy calling. "A priest," said he, "should indeed be learned, because our Lord has given him to be 'the light of the world' (Matt. v. 14); but his learning should be simply in the law of God, because it is from his mouth that the people should be taught" (Malachi

ii. 7). Acting upon this principle, he enjoined his clergy to make the Holy Scriptures their continual study, and by constant meditation upon them, with prayer for divine illumination to store their minds with the rich treasures of holy wisdom they contain, so that being well instructed themselves, they might be able to instruct the people. To this continual searching of the Holy Scriptures, as a matter of the first importance, he added the duty of acquiring a sufficient knowledge of the Canons, and a careful study of the principles and discipline of the Church; and it is worthy of remark and the reflection of all honest minds, that within these three divisions of study all the knowledge was comprised which in the primitive ages of the Church was deemed necessary to qualify for the Priesthood and the Episcopate. And seeing no more was needed in those happy times to form excellent ministers of the Gospel and great saints, it was for that reason that this worthy bishop, whose single aim was the sanctification of his people, recommended his clergy to limit their studies to these three divisions. By this simple rule he preserved them from the dangerous temptation of discharging superficially the essential duties of their ministry in order to apply themselves to profound studies in the spirit of an insatiable curiosity, which supplies food for the natural pride of the human heart, destroys the spirit of prayer, and extinguishes piety. M. d'Alet perceived how much this evil had contributed to the scholastic divinity of the age, and deeply lamented it. He saw with grief that the energies which might have been directed to bring sinners to repentance, and to win souls for Christ, and to diffuse among the masses a knowledge of the pure and simple truths of the Gospel, were absorbed by many in the discussion of difficult and intricate questions, treated with great subtlety, and much more calculated to embarrass the mind than to enlighten it. No such enqui-

ries would he admit into his seminary, nor would he willingly give any employment in his diocese to those who were addicted to this theology of the schools, unless they wholly renounced such studies and applied themselves in good earnest to the true science of the Church,—*the study of the human heart*. He frequently conversed with his young students on this important subject, continually impressing upon their minds the danger that exists in gratifying that *human* taste for study which he told them would deprive them of the fruit of all their labours. He informed them that to appear learned in the eyes of men was a wrong motive for study, and equally wrong, too, to study for the purpose of enjoying the pleasure which usually accompanies the discovery of truth. Their true and worthy motive should be to obtain that knowledge which would make them “wise unto salvation,” and to render themselves competent to impart it to others. “Christian study,” said he, “should ever be accompanied by the spirit of prayer, and they should be inseparable, for each requires great simplicity of mind, ‘content with that measure of light and knowledge which God is pleased to impart’ (Romans xii. 3), not desirous of surpassing others, but willing rather to take the lowest place, assured that all its labour will be fully recompensed in the success which it pleases God to accord it.” He frequently lamented the blindness of some ecclesiastics, even of those who were not destitute of real piety. “They allow themselves,” said he, “to be deceived by an illusion in the choice of their studies; their object being good, they pursue it with confidence and ardour, but they are blind to their danger, for it too often happens that the fruit of their labours, instead of strengthening them in piety and furthering their growth in charity, serves but to supply food for vanity and self-love.”

Such were the principles that M. d'Alet instilled into his

clergy. He desired to see their investigations limited to the acquisition of that wisdom which would make them most useful to the people. He did not, however, condemn those whom God had evidently called to the defence of His Church, and who applied themselves to deeper study, labouring assiduously to cultivate the talents given to them for this purpose, that they might defend the truth against the attacks of its enemies. Unless, however, the calling was evident, he deprecated any one leaving the common path, and trembled for those whose extensive learning was not accompanied with the spirit of prayer and humility. He remarked, when speaking on this subject, that those great fathers of the Church, who, like Saint Augustine, have defended with such wisdom and learning the sublime truths of Christianity, were possessed with the grace of humility in a more than ordinary degree, and a depth of piety proportioned to the elevation of their genius and the extent of their acquirements. He applied this principle also when speaking of those great sufferers for the Truth in his own day,—that devoted band of Christian men and women which formed the community of Port Royal; and regarded their trials and sufferings as a preservative against the danger to which their humility was exposed, in consequence of their extraordinary talents and the brilliancy of their writings. Knowing how few have any real calling for these learned studies, he always warned his clergy against them, as a snare tending to draw them away from their true duties,—the care and teaching of their flocks, which ought to absorb their whole and undivided attention. He exhorted them to *read little* and to *meditate much*, as the surest method for the permanent acquisition of truth. “Rapid studies,” said he, “make but a feeble impression upon the mind; they do but glide, so to speak, over its surface, and the confused traces which they leave behind often serve but to

increase the darkness. Let your studies be regulated by order and method, and take care that the lessons they impart be engraven deeply on the mind by means of meditation; they will then become a source of light, and whatever is acquired in this way will never be forgotten."

While thus M. d'Alet dissuaded his clergy from pursuing those investigations which are not consistent with the ordinary employments of a minister of Jesus Christ, he required them to be well grounded and informed in Christian doctrine, and the rules and practice of holy living. In the instructions which were given to them in the seminary of Alet upon the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Commandments of God, and the Sacraments of the Church, under which four divisions, it may be said, all sound theology is contained, nothing was omitted which in any way related to Christian life and doctrine. Previous to the lectures which M. d'Alet delivered to them upon the profound mysteries of predestination and grace, it pleased God to permit him to revive the prejudices which through erroneous teaching he had contracted in his youth on these two important subjects, for ages the fruitful sources of unhappy divisions. Knowing that the Church has ever followed the teaching of Saint Augustine on these two points of doctrine, he applied himself to study the writings of this great Father, and while doing so, his prejudices vanished, and the solid foundations of piety, humility, and Christian confidence which he discovered in them, filled him with delight. No less was he gratified in perceiving what a perfect knowledge they displayed of the natural corruption and depravity of the human heart, and of the wounds which original sin has made in the being of man, its poison, to speak figuratively, flowing in the veins of every child of Adam, impairing all his capabilities, and inclining him evil; and on the other hand, of that sovereign grace of

earned and purchased by the Death and Passion of His Son, and of its sufficiency in remedying the natural incapacity of man for all good, and enabling him by means of its invincible efficacy to live in the practice of every Christian virtue.

Persuaded that, among the mysteries of the Christian faith, there were none that human reason has shown itself more curious to penetrate than those of predestination and grace, M. d'Alet took especial care in the lectures which were delivered in his seminary upon these doctrines, to limit very strictly the dangerous spirit of an inordinate curiosity which he regarded as a rock upon which shipwreck has often been made; and to those specious objections which human reason in its pride and blindness has ever opposed to Catholic verities, he would always reply in the words of St. Paul: "O man, who art thou that replyest against God?" (Romans ix. 20.) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans xi. 13.)

There was one admonition which he always earnestly pressed upon his clergy respecting the administration of the Holy Sacrament to the sick; viz., on no occasion to administer it before previously explaining its nature and effects, and the disposition of heart, which is so absolutely necessary in order to obtain the benefits of a worthy receiving thereof. He continually warned his clergy against the dangerous habit into which so many fall, of performing their priestly functions in a mechanical way, which gradually divests them of that true spirit of holiness, which it is impossible to communicate to others unless they be themselves partakers of it.

Upon the subject of the Sacraments of the Church, and all other matters of Christian faith and doctrine, he ex-

plained to his clergy whatever was dangerous in the opinions of the crowd of new writers who have attacked the truth in these later times, and corrupted the true faith by the laxity of their doctrines. "The law of God," said he, "ought to be your guide and light; by *it* you will be judged. It is given to us in Holy Scripture, which has been written for our learning, 'Let this Word of God be your constant study.' Read, too, the Fathers and the holy Canons, which are the faithful interpreters of it, and avoid all those casuistic writers of modern times whose aim is to weaken the force of the Holy Law of God by flattering the passions of men."

CHAPTER IX.

Invites the clergy to visit him in turn—success of the seminary—brief account of some of its inmates—M. de Ciron—M. Leonard—M. Taura—M. de Beauvoir—of the laity who entered the seminary—M. de Montaign—two communities of monks, Dominicans and Hermits of St. Augustine—their opposition, and refractory spirit—appeals to Rome against them—reply of the Pope.



WHILE M. d'Alet was thus training a fresh band of earnest workers for the reformation of his diocese, he relaxed none of his endeavours to reclaim the old clergy. As they had never received any such training, nor experienced the restraints of a seminary, he invited them, each in their turn, to visit him, commencing with those who were the most tractable, and particularly with the curés of the more important parishes. They all, with few exceptions, accepted the invitation of their pastor. The period of their visit occupied a fortnight; it afforded them a kind of "retreat," during which they were exercised in the proper manner of prayer, of catechising and preaching, and of fulfilling correctly all the functions of their ministry. The success of these visits exceeded M. d'Alet's most sanguine expectations. They returned most gratified and filled with ardour, and the account which they gave to their friends of the kindness which had been shown to them, and of the edification they had received in it, excited in their brother curés an eagerness to arrive that they might share the same

as before the increasing reputation of the spreading far and wide, reached the most

distant parts, and attracted from various quarters both clergy and laity, who applied to be received within its doors, that, under the guidance of its holy bishop, they might be instructed in the rules and practice of a Christian life. Of the good fruit that was borne in the lives of these applicants who were admitted within its walls, a few examples may be interesting to the reader of these pages.

M. de Ciron while very young had entered the monastery of the Chartreux, and had assumed the habit, with the intention of making profession as soon as he had completed his novitiate; but the severity of the rule practised by this Order being too much for his delicate health to support, he was obliged to relinquish his design. After remaining some time in retreat, wholly occupied in prayer and the study of the Holy Scriptures, he came to consult M. d'Alet, of whose reputation he had been advised. Our good bishop, perceiving in him a marked vocation for the ministry, counselled him to return to Toulouse, and prepare himself to receive Holy Orders from its archbishop. Placing himself under the direction of M. d'Alet, he came to visit him from time to time to receive his advice, and generally accompanied him in his journeys in the diocese. On one occasion they arrived at a mountain hamlet in one of the wildest parts of the country. The inhabitants of this hamlet being deprived of all ministerial succour during the winter months, when the passes among their mountains were blocked up with snow, besought their bishop to appoint a priest to reside with them, and to officiate in a little chapel which they had constructed. M. de Ciron, touched with the state of these poor uncivilized mountaineers, begged M. d'Alet to allow him to take this duty, saying, in the words of St. Lawrence, "Try me, and see, if in selecting me for the ministry I prove worthy of your choice." Charmed with the humility which would thus willingly give up the idea of an elevation, the

sition in the Church, for which his talents and his piety so well fitted him, M. d'Alet did not, however, accede to his request, but shortly after procured his appointment to the Chancellorship of the University of Toulouse, to which was subsequently added the charge of the large and populous parish which comprised nearly one half of that important city. It had been greatly neglected, the ministerial duties were performed by hired priests, and the people were in a state of abandonment. By the labours of M. de Ciron, assisted by a few earnest men, which the endeavours of M. d'Alet had procured for him, it was not long before a marked improvement took place in the character and disposition of the people, the duties of religion were attended to, and good order re-established.

The following is another instance of the happy results of the Christian training of the seminary of Alet. M. Leonard was the eldest son of one of the wealthiest and most influential families in the city of Narbonne. It had pleased God to touch his heart, and, obedient to the call, he forsook *all* to follow Christ, and giving up to a younger brother his right of succeeding to the family estate, he placed himself under the direction of M. d'Alet, and entered his seminary. After passing through the usual course of instruction and training, and after being subjected to many proofs, M. d'Alet was so well satisfied with his progress in piety that he admitted him to Holy Orders. So great was his humility that he could not be prevailed upon to accept any benefice or undertake any charge of souls. He confined himself to the work of preaching the Gospel to the poor in the most neglected parts of the diocese, and in catechising the ignorant. From his private means he established schools for children, and provided for the wants of the poor. His labours were not confined to the diocese of Alet; he returned to Narbonne, his native town, and pursued the same works of

charity in his own neighbourhood. During the prevalence of the cholera, which visited Narbonne and carried off great numbers of its inhabitants, his faith and constancy were beyond all praise. He was on the point of setting out for Alet when this fearful scourge made its appearance. Relinquishing his intention, he remained in Narbonne during the whole time it raged, in order to succour the poor who were most exposed to its fury. When all was over, he returned to Alet with the intention of resuming his labours of love, and soon after entered that eternal rest which remains for the people of God, deeply regretted by all the inhabitants of that province.

M. Taura was another eminent Christian whom it pleased God to separate for Himself under the guidance of our good bishop. A native of the same province of Narbonne, and moving in the highest circles of society, M. Taura united the advantages of birth with those of a brilliant and well-informed mind and the polished manners of a gentleman. He had come to Toulouse, where the court was at that time holding its sittings, in order to receive the emoluments of a richly endowed abbey which one of his uncles had resigned in his favour. It happened that M. d'Alet was at that time visiting Toulouse. They met, and while conversing with him on various occasions, M. d'Alet took the opportunity to endeavour to win him from the world to God. These conversations did not at that time make much impression on M. Taura, but the seed of Divine truth had been sown, and the grace of God—to whom the souls of the rich and poor are alike precious—had prepared the soil for its reception, which in due time brought forth an abundant harvest. He returned home, but his gaiety had fled; the words of the good bishop recurred again and again to his mind, his conscience was agitated, and he took the resolution, in spite of the opposition of his family and friends, to resign the rich

abbey with its ample revenues, and to take up the Cross and follow Christ. He placed himself under M. d'Alet's direction, and remained for several years an inmate of his seminary, edifying all around him by his life of penitence and humility. Not judging it proper to admit him to Holy Orders, M. d'Alet employed him in catechising and giving religious instruction in several parishes of his diocese. His pleasing exterior, his gentle and engaging manner, his exemplary piety, and the clearness and unction of his appeals won all hearts. He applied himself very zealously in healing divisions and reconciling family quarrels in the spirit of our Lord's words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," and his efforts in this direction were abundantly blessed. An attack of weakness in the chest obliged him to return to his native place, where he continued until his death the same labours of love which he had pursued so successfully in the diocese of Alet.

Of all the eminently pious followers of our Lord, who were formed and moulded, so to speak, beneath the eye of our good bishop, there were none who in a greater degree imbibed his spirit and followed his example more closely than M. de Beauvoir. Before the appointment of M. d'Alet it had been his duty to take charge of the temporalities of the see while it remained vacant, and it was he who informed M. d'Alet, on his arrival, of all matters connected with the state of the diocese. Subsequently, M. de Beauvoir entered the seminary of Alet, and after a very successful course of training was there ordained priest. The zeal of our good bishop for the glory of God, and for the reformation of His Church in other dioceses besides that of Alet, induced him to send M. de Beauvoir into that of Bourges, of which he was a native, to commence a work of reform which was there so much needed. The endeavours of M. de Beauvoir to gain the hearts of the clergy of the country parishes were so

successful, that he prevailed upon them to follow the method pursued in Alet in their various instructions and discourses. His mission was attended with the happiest results. The reformation which his labours had induced reached the ears of the Prince of Conti, who conceived for him so great an esteem, that he sent for him, and invested him with authority to visit all his estates, to take cognizance of the conduct of the priests and officers of justice, to remedy scandals, reform abuses, repair and ornament the churches that had fallen into decay, and to do all that was necessary for the re-establishment of good order. In this great undertaking he laboured with success until it pleased God to take him to his reward.

The increasing reputation of our good bishop, and the renown of his seminary, attracted not only members of the clergy to Alet, but numerous individuals from among the laity also, among whom were several of high rank among the French nobility, who were desirous of placing themselves under the guidance of so enlightened a director of souls. Under his teaching these penitent recluses became models of piety, and their holy and regular lives were an example even to the clergy. Eminent among these for zeal and usefulness was M. de Montaign. He had abandoned the military profession in order to devote the rest of his life to the exercises of piety, and rendered the most valuable assistance to M. d'Alet. No grand vicar ever laboured with greater zeal and success than did this Christian gentleman, under the direction of his bishop. It may be said that he even exercised the functions of that office in the exhortations he gave to the people in those places where the bishop had sent him to endeavour to bring them back to a sense of their religious obligations. The penitent life of this worthy man, his Christian zeal, and eminent piety, all contributed in a powerful degree to influence those who came in contact

with him, and many were the applications that were made by his friends to the bishop to have him admitted to Holy Orders. But the very exalted idea of the Christian priesthood, which, it has been previously observed, was a marked characteristic of our good bishop, made him exceedingly careful in his selection of those persons whom he admitted into its ranks. It was not to their present state and qualifications only that he looked,—these might be all that could be desired,—but he also took into consideration the history of their past lives, and, in the case of M. de Montaign, the irregularities of his youth were a fatal hindrance in the eyes of M. d'Alet to his elevation to the priesthood. In adopting these exclusive principles he followed the rule and discipline of the Church in primitive times, which invariably prohibited those persons from ever entering Holy Orders who had fallen from their baptismal innocence by some crime which had subjected them to canonical penance. The self-denying labours of this Christian gentleman attracted the notice of the Prince of Conti, while passing through Alet on his way to Italy to take command of the French forces. He made his acquaintance, and so highly did he esteem his character that, in spite of all opposition, he attached him to his suite, and took him to Italy. He returned with the Prince from his Italian campaign, and soon after his arrival at Bordeaux was seized with an illness of which he died.

In the diocese of Alet were two communities of monks, the one Dominicans the other Hermits of St. Augustine. It might naturally have been supposed that these two brotherhoods would have supplied valuable help to M. d'Alet in his great undertaking, and have rendered him great assistance in diffusing among his people the principles of our holy faith. Here were a numerous band of men, who, in order the better to serve God, had renounced the world, not only in principle, as every Christian professes to do in Holy

Baptism, but had literally left it, freed themselves from all secular occupation, and by taking the threefold vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, had divested themselves from all encumbrance of the cares of life, so that the whole of their time and thoughts might be devoted to an uninterrupted attention to prayer and holy exercises. Under these considerations, it might fairly have been hoped that in these two religious brotherhoods M. d'Alet would have found a phalanx of Christian warriors, fully equipped with the whole armour of God, strong in faith and piety, ready to do battle with sin and ignorance and error for the glory of God and the good of His Church. Unfortunately, all such hopes were disappointed. M. d'Alet received no assistance whatever from these communities; on the contrary, they were a continual thorn in his side, and, far from aiding him in the good work of diffusing the knowledge of vital Christianity throughout the diocese, they became the chief sources of opposition to his labours for this object, and endeavoured in various ways to render these labours ineffectual.

The opposition of these two convents to the good work which M. d'Alet was pursuing obliged him at last to appeal to Rome against them. In a letter addressed to Pope Alexander VII. he complains that these convents opposed greatly his efforts for the reformation of the diocese; that they set at defiance his episcopal authority, and drew away the people from their legitimate pastors by inviting them to attend their services, which were held at the same hour as the public services of the parishes, thus depriving them of the instructions they would otherwise receive from their own pastors. He complained, too, that their practices were opposed to that right and due administration of the Sacraments to which he was striving to accustom the people, and that both in public and private, by preaching and conversation, in defiance of his authority, they promulgated doctrines and

opinions contrary to those which he and his clergy laboured to diffuse among the people. "I have considered it my duty," he concludes, "to acquaint your Holiness with these things, in the hope that your pastoral care and solicitude would deign to remedy an evil of such magnitude, and bring about a right state of things."

This application to the Pope was fruitless of any good result; it indeed drew forth a reply expressed in terms most polite and eulogistic, highly commending our good bishop for his pastoral vigilance, and especially for his submission to the holy see, but, instead of rendering him any assistance by repressing the opposition of the monks or subjecting them to episcopal control, it simply enclosed a bundle of "Indulgences" wherewith to reward those who made episcopal visits to Alet, attended its conferences, or underwent a retreat in its seminary.

CHAPTER X.

Some of the clergy are intractable—no true calling—severe measures—opposition of the Metropolitan—pluralities and non-residence—M. de l'Estang—persecution—lawsuit—great firmness of M. d'Alet—deliberates slowly—acts with vigour and constancy—irregularities of some of the clergy—prevailing vice—instance—sharp remedies—Capuchins of Limoux—presentation of livings—many submit to the strict rule of M. d'Alet—clergy accused of crimes—placed in confinement—how treated.



ALTHOUGH the efforts of M. d'Alet to reform his clergy were upon the whole successful, there still remained a certain number who resisted every appeal, and remained incorrigible. These individuals had entered the ministry without any true calling thereto, and had no real capacity for the performance of its sacred functions, nor, indeed, any sense whatever of experimental religion. They looked upon their profession as a trade, which they had adopted from mere mercenary motives. Several of them lived in the habitual practise of drunkenness and debauchery ; they were usurers, lending money to the needy at exorbitant rates of interest, and they wallowed in all kinds of vice. Those who were the least abandoned passed their time in sloth and idleness, which kept them in a state of ignorance and stupidity, and rendered them incapable of raising themselves above the enjoyment of earthly things.

Long had M. d'Alet sighed over this melancholy state of things, and with many prayers had he besought the Divine assistance for its remedy. At length, he conceived it to be his duty to repress, by the force of his authority, those whom he had vainly endeavoured so long and repeatedly to lead

by gentle remonstrance and persuasion. It must be painful for a soul established in charity to use measures of severity, though there are occasions when it is the truest charity to adopt them, namely, when all other means have failed to rescue souls from their eternal ruin. It was long before our good bishop could bring himself to use severity, but when once he had determined upon this course, which he only did after much thought and prayer, he acted at once and with vigour. Judicial information of the irregularities of the offenders was laid before him ; they were served with episcopal admonitions, decrees of imprisonment followed, and legal proceedings were issued against those who, convicted of their crimes, had taken flight. Unhappily, however, these vigorous measures were too often frustrated by the Metropolitan, the Archbishop of Narbonne, to whom many of these fugitives appealed, and under whose protection they found an asylum. The Archbishop of Narbonne, who entertained a prejudice against M. d'Alet, either upset or weakened many of his judicial sentences. The following was one which was thus set aside : A curé had been arraigned before the episcopal court of Alet for a gross act of debauchery with a daughter of one of his parishioners, who had come to him for spiritual advice. This crime resulted in the birth of a child which its mother destroyed. The criminal was deprived of his cure, and declared by the bishop incapable of ever again holding any benefice. This sentence was set aside by the Metropolitan, who, after a short suspension, reinstated him in his former position.

Our good bishop had to contend with a serious evil which existed in his diocese, too common, alas ! in many other dioceses besides that of Alet,—the enjoyment of ecclesiastical revenues by non-resident clergy. An instance may be mentioned to show in what light M. d'Alet regarded this great abuse, and the way in which he dealt with it. Deter-

mined to remedy a practice which he felt to be in every way wrong in principle and most injurious to the cause of religion, he commenced with the dean of his cathedral, who occupied the post of Counsellor to the Parliament of Toulouse. This magistrate neither resided in Alet, nor attended to the duties of the office he held there, his only concern being for its revenues which were considerable. M. d'Alet had long remonstrated with him, and had used those arguments which he considered would have had the most weight with an individual in his position, but in vain. At last he issued an episcopal ordonnance commanding all the titled clergy, as well as all those who were in possession of benefices requiring residence, to return to them instantly, under penalty of excommunication and suspension. The dean, who had received a copy of this ordonnance, startled by its vigour and severity, returned immediately to Alet, and was received by the bishop with the greatest kindness and cordiality. Convinced by his reasons, and perceiving him to be inflexible in his determination, the dean relinquished his office, with the emoluments attached to it, exchanging it for benefices situated in other dioceses. In consequence of this exchange, the office of dean of Alet became the property of a young gentleman of Toulouse who was preparing for the Church. Having as yet only received the tonsure, and not being in Holy Orders, the bishop would not permit him to enjoy the honorary rights and precedency attached to this dignity, which would have placed him above the priests. After several interviews with the bishop, whose firmness and determination convinced him of the uselessness of offering any further opposition, and whose gentle manner won his heart, he relinquished the idea of entering the ecclesiastical profession, and laid the valuable appointment he had purchased at the bishop's feet.

A similar misfortune happened to M. d'Alet on this oc

casion to that which had been experienced by St. Augustine when he nominated Anthony to the bishopric of Fussalles. M. de l'Estang, to whom this appointment was given, appeared in every way worthy of it, and his life at this time was truly edifying, but his subsequent history was deplorable, and he became eventually his benefactor's most cruel enemy. Belonging to one of the chief families of Toulouse, he had entered the ecclesiastical state at an early age, and on the occasion of one of M. d'Alet's visits to that city had consulted him upon the design he entertained of retiring from the world and entering a monastery. M. d'Alet endeavoured to dissuade him from adopting such a course, and counselled him to prefer the clerical estate with its active usefulness to the life of the cloister,—that, by such a choice, he would more favourably employ his talents for God in the service of the Church. He followed this advice, and the year following M. d'Alet received him into his own household, admitting him among the number of those whom he termed “his family,” and who resided under his roof. His conduct was exemplary, he received instruction with docility, and displayed at first considerable intelligence. His capacity was, however, small, and not feeling himself possessed of any talent for directing souls, he occupied himself with various works of piety and charity, and was charged with the care of the altars and the cathedral ornaments. No sooner was he elevated to the post of dean than his conduct immediately changed, the natural pride of a heart unrenewed by grace broke out, and on the occasion of the death of the vicar-general, displayed itself by aspiring to the vacant office. Finding that M. d'Alet made no proposition to him on this subject, his vanity was wounded, and in his absence, and without his sanction, he presumed upon undertaking some of the duties connected with this post. Being informed of this irregularity, M. d'Alet wrote to him an admonitory letter

requesting him at once to desist. Extremely mortified to find that he was held in less consideration than he had imagined, his feeling towards the bishop changed into dislike which daily increased in bitterness. He attached himself to the refractory canons, who carried on a system of opposition to the bishop, left the episcopal residence, and took up his lodging in the town. Not satisfied with this, he sought every opportunity to injure and annoy his kind benefactor, and circulated all kinds of injurious reports and calumnies respecting him. It was at this time that the affair of the famous formulary, which we shall have again to allude to more at length, was making such a stir in the Church of France; and as the irreproachable conduct of the bishop presented no handle for attack, it was with him as with the persecuted prophet of old, respecting whom it was said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (Dan. vi. 5.) Consequently, this unworthy dean immediately seized the opportunity of the bishop's refusal to sign this celebrated document, to decry him both in Rome and Paris. The vague accusation of Jansenism, however, which was brought against him, though supported by all the power and influence of the Jesuits, was ineffectual. No better success attended the legal process with which M. de l'Estang and his associates perseveringly pursued him. They lost their cause, and were condemned to submit themselves to their bishop, and to seek his absolution from the censures they had deservedly drawn upon themselves. M. de l'Estang, mortified by the ill success of his schemes, impoverished by the expenses of his lawsuit, and abandoned even by the Jesuits, his protectors and instigators, retired to Toulouse in an imbecile state of mind.

Under these severe trials and persecutions, the conduct of M. d'Alet was truly edifying. The legal process with

which the dean and his associates, supported by the Jesuits, pursued him, was well calculated to harass and perplex him. Convinced of the goodness of his cause, he undertook its defence from views which were above all human motives, and commended it to God with humble resignation to His will. Having done this, he remained calm and tranquil, even when his trials were the most severe. He never left his diocese, or discontinued for a single day the functions of his ministry. The principles upon which he acted in this affair appear in a letter addressed to his friend M. de Ciron, who had suggested an accommodation.

The reason why he could not enter into the accommodation proposed, he replied, was that he felt he ought not to seek his own repose to the prejudice of the cause of Church discipline which M. de l'Estang had in every way violated, and especially had he done so in bringing matters purely ecclesiastical before secular tribunals. For himself, his endeavour had been to act in accordance with the rules of that discipline, and in this path of duty he had found true peace. If, on the other hand, he were to assent to such a proposition, the discipline of the Church, which he was endeavouring to maintain, would receive a fatal blow, and the refractory spirits in his diocese, who were attentively watching his conduct in this affair, would instantly take advantage of it; that, if he acted simply with a view to temporal things, gladly would he assent to any equitable arrangement, but he was convinced that if, on the present occasion, he relaxed a single point, he should betray his ministry; that he would much rather submit to be unjustly condemned, for he should at least have the consolation of having done his duty. Besides, being by virtue of his office of chief pastor charged with the salvation of his persecutors, who were members of his communion, he could not in conscience consent to their injustice, so totally opposed to all ecclesias-

tical rules ; that his present duty was to pray to God unceasingly that He would turn their hearts back again, for the edification of his diocese and the good order of his cathedral church.

It will have been perceived that firmness of purpose was a very distinguishing feature in the mind of M. d'Alet, and were it not that he was totally free from prejudice, this quality of mind might have settled into obstinacy. It was not so, however. A mind that allows itself to be swayed by feeling, or that judges hastily without patiently investigating the truth, will very likely be obstinate or vacillating. But this was not the character of M. d'Alet. In all matters of importance he was slow in acting. He pondered long on the course he should take ; he prayed much ; he examined with care. He used his reason and judgment as the instruments which God had given him for discerning the truth, first seeking to have them strengthened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit of Truth ; and when once the path of duty was clearly discerned, no human consideration could turn him from it. His firmness was inflexible. No matter what dangers menaced him, with a manly courage he faced them all ; nothing could intimidate him, or turn him from his purpose, when acting with a single aim for the glory of God and the welfare of His Church.

There were other members of the cathedral chapter whose irregularities caused M. d'Alet deep pain, and against whom he was obliged at last to act with severity, but not before he had exhausted all the means his charity could suggest to bring them to a sense of their duty. His archdeacon, especially, cost him many prayers and tears. He had abandoned himself to a life of ease and self-indulgence ; M. d'Alet having been informed of the irregularities of which, though without any positive proof, he was frequently suspected, forbade his presence on those occasions when in his episcopal

office he performed service in the cathedral. He even went so far as to refuse him publicly the Holy Communion, when he presented himself with the other canons to receive it from his hands, hoping by this means to bring him to repentance. The archdeacon, imagining that M. d'Alet would never have risked such an expedient as this had he not been possessed of proof sufficient to convince him of the crimes his conscience accused him of, dare not complain, although by this proceeding he was held up to public contempt. He even had the prudence to avoid the blow, which he feared would fall upon him when the time came for the bishop's chaplain to make his report of those whose lives were a public scandal. In the presence, therefore, of his brother clergy, he confessed his faults, declared his repentance, and received the public penance which the bishop thought proper to impose. Some time after, having relapsed into the same irregularities, of which there was convincing proof, judicial proceedings were taken against him. He was deprived of his ecclesiastical dignities, which the bishop permitted him to exchange for the office in the monastery of St. Adrien, which was at that period filled by M. Brandine, an individual of exemplary piety, and who, under the direction of our good bishop, discharged for many years the duties of the archdeaconry of Alet.

It would be needless to enumerate the various judicial proceedings which the bishop undertook against those members of his clergy who, holding benefices in the diocese, refused to remain in residence. In all cases these severe but necessary measures were preceded by the kindest entreaties and remonstrances, and it was not until all means had been tried and failed, that some were dispossessed of their benefices altogether, and others condemned to pay fines proportioned to their revenues. He exercised similar authority towards the curés and vicars who, without proper

cause, absented themselves from the conferences of the diocese. The result was, by degrees the whole number of what may be termed the refractory clergy were brought into submission.

Of all the vices that prevailed in the diocese, there was none that gave the bishop so much pain and labour to overcome as the incontinence of the clergy. Many were callous to his most pathetic exhortations, and took such precautions that all his endeavours to obtain sufficient proof to have them convicted were rendered fruitless. Determined not to be beaten, the bishop then issued admonitory letters, which obliged all who possessed any knowledge of these crimes to come forward and give information. This had the desired effect ; and, to give an instance, among other depositions was one against the Curé of Bézu, who was accused of living in adultery with one of his parishioners whose husband had separated from her. The inhabitants of the place, who had not dared to speak, as the squire had given the curé his countenance and protection, upon the publication of the bishop's mandate, made their deposition, upon which the accused was arrested and committed to prison. The Prince de Conti arriving about this time at Alet, the squire of Bézu, accompanied by some of his friends, prayed him to act as a mediator in this affair, promising on the part of the curé that he would submit to whatever penance the bishop should think fit to impose. M. d'Alet, whose heart was touched at the thought of the misery to which this unhappy man would be exposed if he abandoned him to the secular courts, joyfully consented to the proposition which was made, upon the condition that the prisoner should first confess his crime. This he did, in presence of the Prince de Conti and some other witnesses ; whereupon the bishop interdicted him from all ministerial functions, imposed upon him canonical penance, the order of which was given to him

in writing, and ordered him, in accordance with the ancient canons, to retire into a monastery. Had there been any genuine repentance in this case, these measures, so wisely conceived and so conformable to the true spirit of Church discipline, would doubtless have been attended with most salutary results ; in the absence of any such feeling they had a contrary effect. To accomplish his penance he entered the Capuchin monastery of Limoux, but scarcely had he been there a month when several of the members of that fraternity, instead of aiding him by their counsel and prayers to seek for the grace of true repentance before God, fanned the flame of resentment against his bishop, and urged him to appeal against his sentence before the parliament of Toulouse. The Capuchins of Limoux had been prohibited by the bishop from foraging, or, in other words, from making begging excursions in the diocese of Alet, having found that they opposed his authority and endeavoured to counteract his teaching. This proceeding roused their animosity against M. d'Alet, and they seized the opportunity of revenging themselves by espousing the cause of the Curé of Bézu. They persuaded him to leave the monastery, lodged him at Toulouse, and espoused his cause with so much ardour that they succeeded in obtaining for him a favourable decree, against which M. d'Alet was obliged to proceed in the courts of Paris. The curé accordingly proceeded to Paris, where he was still powerfully assisted by the Capuchins, who spared no efforts to have the decree of Toulouse confirmed. After being occupied some years in this affair, declaiming furiously against his bishop, this unhappy man was seized with a cancer in the eye, which overspread the whole face, and he died in the same impenitence in which he had lived.

Another evil prevailed in the diocese, which tended greatly to frustrate the labours of our good bishop for the sanctification of his people. This was the indiscriminate presen-

tation of Church livings. The authority of the bishop was powerless to remedy this grievous abuse, and he could but sigh over it, and pray for the merciful overruling of God. It frequently happened that these presentations were made to individuals whose lives and doctrine the bishop could not approve, and who were obliged to have recourse to the Metropolitan, who was not so particular. All that the bishop could do on these occasions was to pray the more earnestly for his Church, and especially for those who entered its ministry from inferior motives, taking upon themselves the instruction and guidance of souls, and whom he knew to be unfit for so solemn and responsible a duty. The principal number of those who were in this manner possessed of benefices were, nevertheless, much grieved to feel that they were holding them against the will of their bishop, for whom they could not but feel a deep veneration, and great were the efforts they made to obtain his assent and approval. They met with no success. Those whom the bishop could not hinder he tolerated, but nothing could induce him to consent to any appointment against the light of his judgment. His firmness in this respect was frequently attended with happy results. It so deeply affected some of those who had obtained the countenance of the Metropolitan that it led them at length to resign the livings which they held by this means. Two examples of this kind will serve to show how remarkable was the influence of this holy man upon those with whom he had to deal.

M. Courtet had been appointed to a benefice of which a portion of the revenue had been reserved by the proprietor. To this M. d'Alet gave his decided refusal, and M. Courtet thereupon obtained the *visa* of another less scrupulous bishop. This being upset by a decree of council, he had recourse to the Metropolitan, who gave him his support, and ratified the deed which he had drawn up to secure

to him the benefice with the condition attached to it. Accompanied by a notary and two witnesses, he brought it to M. d'Alet that it might be signified to him judicially. The bishop received him kindly, and endeavoured to convince him of the illegality of his proceeding, and the evil consequences that were likely to flow from it. He spoke so convincingly, and withal so tenderly, that M. Courtet was quite overcome; he tore the deed into pieces, threw himself at the bishop's feet, and, with tears in his eyes, besought his forgiveness, and placed himself entirely in his hands. The bishop, deeply affected, received him into the seminary. He was made a canon of the cathedral, and subsequently appointed to the cure of the parish of Ansugnac, where he edified all by his Christian life and labours.

A canon of Saint Paul, besides his prebend, held possession of a benefice, in virtue of a grant from the Court of Rome accorded to the chapter of Saint Paul. This ecclesiastic was totally ignorant of the mysteries of the Faith, as well as the rules and discipline of a Christian life. He was scarcely able to read, and his house was the resort of the worst characters in the town. This was a sufficient cause for M. d'Alet to suspend him from his ministerial functions, which he did in the course of one of his visits. He appealed to the Metropolitan, who did not hesitate to reinstate him, notwithstanding his unclerical conduct and notorious incapacity for any ministerial duty. Deeply affected by the impropriety of this proceeding, M. d'Alet wrote to the Archbishop to complain of it. His letter made no impression. More successful, however, were his prayers for the conversion of the canon, who, touched with repentance, and conscious of the justice of the interdiction which he had sought to evade, humbly submitted to his bishop, received his advice, and followed with obedience and docility the way pointed out to him for the reparation of his faults.

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CHAPTER XI.

On preferments—the Bishop's rule on this subject—his discernment of character—obtains a remarkable influence—episcopal authority—happy harmony between the Bishop and Clergy—beautiful instance of disinterestedness and devotion—reformation of the Chapter of Alet—and of that of St. Paul—arrest and imprisonment of one of the Canons—violent proceedings.



WE have already alluded to M. d'Alet's unpromising principles as regarded the presentation of livings, and in the present chapter it may be useful to pursue this subject a little further.

It is needless to dwell upon the lamentable evils which have resulted to the Church of Christ, through the bestowal of its livings upon the unworthy. Deeply sensible of this, M. d'Alet was very careful to observe throughout the whole of his episcopal career, that excellent canonical precept, now, alas ! so little followed, to give the benefices of the Church to those only who are the most capable of discharging the duties belonging to them. In order to prevent as much as possible the importunate applications of those who sought them, he took every opportunity to make it generally known that he would never be an acceptor of persons, and for any person to make application to him for any preferment in the diocese, or to solicit it on behalf of others, would infallibly procure for them a certain refusal. From this rule he never deviated. The benefices in the diocese were for the most part in the gift of the principal gentry, and they soon discovered that it was a fruitless labour to endeavour to turn this inflexible prelate from his purpose when he had once determined upon his course.

It was one of the chief objects of his care and solicitude to select the most suitable and worthy members of his clergy to fill the vacant livings. He applied himself diligently to the study of their characters and abilities, and for this purpose went very much among them and conversed with them familiarly in the course of his visits. His discernment was so correct that he was rarely deceived. Not unfrequently, to the great surprise of all, he would reject those who held a high place in the general esteem, and prefer others before them who were considered very inferior in point of merit ; but on these occasions it was not long before the event indicated very clearly that he had judged rightly. A very remarkable instance of this kind occurred in the parish of Rouze. The curé of that parish, a pious and estimable man, and who possessed the esteem and confidence of the bishop, was lying on a bed of sickness ; growing daily more enfeebled, and seeing death approaching, his great desire was to give his flock the last proof of his love and vigilance, by obtaining for them a successor who would watch for their souls and fulfil the duties of a holy and faithful pastor. In pursuance of this desire he sought the bishop's sanction to resign his cure to his vicar, whom he had himself trained, and in whose piety he had every confidence, and who had the reputation of being one of the most zealous ecclesiastics in the diocese. The bishop, however, withheld his consent, and the event proved that his clearer discernment was correct. This man was, at heart, a hypocrite,—his secret life was infamous ; but such were the precautions he took to conceal his vices from the world, that it was with the greatest difficulty they were discovered. His subsequent life brought no amendment : having escaped from prison, to which he had been committed for his crimes, he passed from one diocese to another, under borrowed names, accompanied by a female he had seduced and who passed for his sister. H

was at last arrested upon a charge of theft and sacrilege and poisoned himself while on his way to Alet, whither he was being brought for trial.

The bishop's care and prudence in all these clerical appointments so won the confidence and respect of all his clergy, that at length they would scarcely take a single step in these matters without his consent. As the bishop himself undertook nothing without first communicating his designs to his clergy and conferring with them, so in return they would conclude nothing before submitting their views to his judgment. Thus did the diocese of Alet exhibit an instance of that happy harmony and concert between the first and second order, in which the power and influence of great bishops has ever reposed when, faithful to the maxims of the holy Apostle, they were careful never to domineer over their clergy. (1 Peter v. 3.) It was this that sustained that perfect authority which those two great bishops, Saints Cyprian and Augustine, maintained over the priests who laboured under their rule. Avoiding all affectation of power or ascendancy, they regarded them as equals, and bishop and clergy formed a happy brotherhood, cemented by the bond of love. It was by following these great examples, that M. d'Alet, while maintaining the authority of a bishop, drew to him the hearts of his clergy. Their submission and docility was so great that their benefices for the most part were quite at the bishop's disposal. Fully persuaded that he laboured only for the general good of his Church and for the spiritual well-being of every member of his flock, all the well-disposed of the clergy resigned themselves to his guidance, placed all their personal interest at his disposal, and trusted confidingly in his love. At his word they willingly left their establishments and went wherever he sent them. Clergymen advanced in age, and unable any longer to conduct their parishes, were seen to accept canonries,

while the canons took their places. Others also, who possessed benefices of considerable revenue, obedient to the will of their bishop, exchanged them for others of less value, which he considered better suited to their talents and abilities. Numerous instances of these disinterested changes might be given ; one, however, may suffice :—

A small living in the diocese fell vacant, the revenue attached to it was inconsiderable, and as the Gospel had never yet been preached there as M. d'Alet approved, he took great pains to find a clergyman suited to the necessity of the case. Accordingly, he went to see the clergyman of a large parish, in whom he had great confidence, to consult with him about it, and asked him to lend his assistance to find some one capable of cultivating this barren soil. After some conversation had passed, the bishop remarked, "When a good work has been once established and good order attained I can find plenty of clergymen willing to continue it, but to find a man capable and willing to commence and organize a new work among a wild and demoralized population is very difficult. None of those you mention to me would do ; nor can I think of any one suited for this arduous labour. It needs a man like yourself." The curé at first considered this expression of the bishop's as simply complimentary, but, as the bishop repeated it once or twice, he looked at him earnestly : "My lord," said he, "are you in earnest in speaking thus ? Explain yourself, I entreat you." "I am certainly in earnest," replied the bishop, "in my desire to find a man resembling yourself to take charge of this poor parish, which gives me so much concern ; but it is impossible for me to propose that *you* should leave a cure such as yours, where you are doing so much good, to send you to this poor neglected spot, where you would meet with nothing but discomfort." "Why do you say this to me, my lord ?" returned the good curé, with some warmth, the

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colour mounting in his cheeks as he spoke. "Do you then believe that I have forgotten all your teaching? Is it, then, in *this* world that I look for the reward of my labour? No, my lord, decide whatever you think best; I am entirely at your disposal." The bishop rose, and the tears filled his eyes. "Go, my dear brother," said he, embracing him tenderly, "and you will thus evidence most certainly your zeal for the Church, and your friendship for me. With sentiments such as these, God will surely bless you and sanctify you, and you will be a blessing to those who shall receive your instructions."

As soon as M. d'Alet had succeeded in introducing a strict discipline among the individual members of his clergy, he next took in hand the more arduous work of reforming the chapter of his cathedral and that of Saint Paul. Without enumerating the unclerical habits and grosser vices of the members of these bodies, such as occupying their time in the chase, immodesty, indolence, gambling, and debauchery, which were more easy to repress, other abuses, more difficult to deal with, had crept in, and, through the negligence of the former bishops of Alet, had grown in strength and passed into a custom. Before taking the first step, M. d'Alet, as was his invariable practice, prayed long and fervently; with the assistance of his council he examined carefully what must be corrected and what might be tolerated; by judiciously questioning individuals he discovered the various opposition he would have to encounter. He redoubled his efforts to impress upon the unruly members of his clergy, by his gentleness and love to them more than by word, how ardently he desired to live with them in peace and harmony, at the same time, telling them that toleration must have limits, and that there were some things that *must* be amended. His love and patience at last won them, and they ceased to see one whom they found inflexible in everything which

concerned right order and discipline, but who was always ready to relax in any matter that concerned his own personal interest.

During all these troubles he observed carefully, and with more than usual zeal, with his chapter, the vigils of the great festivals, and zealously exhorted its members, as it was his custom to do, daily after compline. It was by the heartfelt and luminous appeals made on these occasions, accompanied with the eloquence with which he was so highly gifted, that he gained over many hearts. "These were the arms," he used to say, "with which a bishop should defend himself, and never should proceedings such as the law provides for the maintenance of good order be resorted to until every other means have failed, and all kinds of persuasion have been exhausted, and the sword of the Word of God have been used in vain."

In the case of the chapter of Saint Paul, the difficulties that stood in the way of its reform were much greater. It has been once or twice mentioned that these canons held other benefices besides their canonries, in virtue of titles obtained from Rome. This evil was insupportable to M. d'Alet, who found nothing more opposed to the spirit and rules of the Church than to see, contrary to the ancient canons, the same individual invested with several offices, inconsistent with each other, each requiring personal residence.

M. d'Alet went carefully and prudently to work. He first of all closely examined the Roman indulgence which granted these livings; he discovered a serious flaw. It had been accorded upon false representations. Upon this being shown, several at once gave up further opposition and submitted to the bishop. The rest appealed to the Parliament of Toulouse, and, being requested to present their titles, it was discovered that they had never been registered in France. This legal informality placed them entirely at the mercy of

the bishop, but his repugnance to bring ecclesiastical matters before secular tribunals caused him to relinquish all further proceedings. The desired end, however, was attained ; the titles were pronounced invalid ; the ordonnance of the bishop on the subject of pluralities was confirmed, and the refractory chapter condemned to submission. Many of the canons and prebends whose consciences were troubled at the thought of the illicit revenues they had so long enjoyed, gave up all into the hands of the bishop, and submitted voluntarily to his paternal advice.

It was about this time that an event took place at Saint Paul of a very scandalous nature, which gave occasion to M. d'Alet to exhibit fresh proof of his gentleness and forbearance. During a visit to Saint Paul he found it necessary to have one of the canons arrested and imprisoned. This man was living in open adultery with the wife of a citizen of that town, who had been obliged in consequence to retire in great distress to the town of Carcassonne, of which he was a native. The canon, who was a man of high position and family, had many friends. One of them, a gentleman named M. d'Ayat, having heard of his arrest, came in the evening with a number of companions who had been carousing together, and, surrounding the house in which the canon was confined, and where, too, the bishop was staying, they made a furious attack upon it, demanding, with loud cries, the instant release of the prisoner. No attention being paid to them, they attempted to burst open the doors ; not succeeding in this they reviled the bishop in language the most filthy and abominable. It was quite in his power, as manorial lord of that parish, to have brought these disturbers of the peace to condign punishment ; but he acted in a different way, and, bidding his people rest quiet, he submitted in silence to this grievous indignity. It lasted until daylight, when the attention of the neighbourhood being aroused,

the ruffianly crew retired. The friends of the gentleman who headed this outrage, fearing the consequences, urgently besought him to throw himself upon the good bishop's mercy, and ask his pardon for the offence. He took their advice, and, testifying his sorrow for what had occurred, expressed his willingness to atone for his fault in any way the bishop might appoint. M. d'Alet received him kindly, and told him to ask pardon for the offence publicly in the parish church on the succeeding Sunday. He did so before all the people, and the bishop, in a loud voice that all might hear, prescribed to him the fasts, the alms, and the prayers he should make, in reparation for the public scandal he had committed. The canon, also, submitted to his bishop, received the order of his penance, and retired to the place where he was required to perform it.

CHAPTER XII.

Plan for the education of the young—school for girls—views on secular education—forms an association of ladies for instructing the village children—opposition—the bishop's ideas on "communities"—the sisterhood of the Regents—its rules and the nature of its work—extract from the "Tour to Alet" on the subject of the Regents.



D'ALET, deeply impressed with the importance of a sound Christian education for the children of his diocese, had trained in his seminary teachers for the instruction of boys. To provide for the girls was a matter of considerable difficulty. The softer sex, which seems more naturally receptive of pious impressions than the other, needed all his care, and they were as dear to him as they have always been to the great bishops of former times. In the wild and neglected district of Alet suitable mistresses did not exist, and as it was impossible to obtain them elsewhere, there seemed no other way left than to form them out of the materials which were ready to hand. It was a work of time and difficulty. He looked around him, and could find no one so well suited to commence the work as the pious widow, of whom mention has been made in a previous chapter, and who had been so anxiously looking forward to the arrival of the newly appointed bishop. Her deep piety, her zeal in visiting the sick and poor and performing those offices of charity with which she was charged, gave the bishop reason to think that no one was more likely than she was to succeed in commencing the good work of providing Christian education for the young girls in the diocese. Unable, however, to read write, except very imperfectly, this would almost have

seemed to many an insurmountable obstacle to the undertaking. It did not seem so to M. d'Alet. He felt persuaded that the great zeal and piety which God had given her would supply all the talents she needed, or would enable her to obtain them. Besides, it was not his principal design to teach these children to read and write, or to cultivate their intellects; his great aim was to make them Christians. It was not by mental accomplishments to enable them to shine in the world, but by Christian graces to fit them for the trials and sorrows of life, that he purposed these schools of instruction. He, therefore, used the rudiments of education simply as means to draw the children around him, and induce their parents to send them to the schools. His chief design was to instruct them in Christian doctrine, to inspire them with sentiments of solid piety, to preserve their baptismal innocence, and save them from the seductions of the world.

This good widow, therefore, was constituted the first mistress of the school for girls in the town of Alet. The bishop himself instructed her in all her duties. He drew up rules for her guidance and for the conduct of the school. He taught her how to catechise, and spared no efforts to give life to this new undertaking. His care and labour in thus taking part in the work drew together a great number of young people, and when it became generally known that the school received the benefit of his visits and teaching, young and old in numbers applied for admittance. He seized the opportunity at once, and began by instructing them in their principal duties, and endeavoured especially to inspire them with sentiments of female modesty. For several years there existed but this one school for girls in the diocese of Alet. Long had its good bishop endeavoured to extend this blessing to every parish, but he had sought the means in vain. His only resource was in prayer, and

his fervent and persevering applications were at length answered by the merciful supply of all that was needed. Two young ladies, piously disposed, belonging to two of the principal families in Alet, and who entertained a great friendship for each other, had much wished to embrace a religious life together, and for this purpose to enter some religious community. Their parents, to whom they had spoken on the subject, came to M. d'Alet to consult him about the vocation of their daughters, and advise them in what monastery it would be most suitable to place them. He told them that they might equally serve God by undertaking the instruction of their own village children, and they would thus be employing the talents which He had given them more usefully than they could do within the walls of a monastery. He dwelt upon the importance of such a work, and spoke of the obligation that lay upon the owners of property to provide for the spiritual needs of the poor who lived upon their estates. His words made a deep impression; they returned home joyfully to communicate the project to their daughters, and to obtain the consent of their husbands to begin it. The two young ladies received the proposal with pleasure, and were eager to begin the work; but the father of one of these two friends would on no account permit his daughter to engage in such an occupation; the other was, therefore, obliged either to abandon the undertaking or to begin it alone and unaided. Relying upon the Divine assistance, she determined upon the latter course, and, undaunted by the opposition of her friends and the world around her, she applied herself resolutely to the work, and, by the blessing of God, an abundant success soon rewarded her labours. Like all other good works of this kind, this one was not exempt, in its early stages, from that opposition which all endeavours for the glory of God and the good of His creatures usually encounter. It was

thought very unbecoming that ladies of the first rank should descend to such employment as this, and those persons whose duty it was to have encouraged them in their noble enterprise did all they could to dissuade them from it. Its chief enemies, however, were the Capuchin friars. The brave girl who began the work was the object of their bitterest attacks ; they spoke of her in the most indecent language, and told her that the judgment of God would most assuredly overtake her, if she did not leave her base employment and take the religious habit. She replied meekly that, far from considering her occupation vile and despicable, she esteemed it a high honour to be called by her bishop to the great work of instructing the poor, who were very dear in the sight of God, and for whom there were special promises in His Word ; that she would appear in the presence of Jesus Christ with greater joy at last after rendering service to those for whom He had shed His blood ; that in bringing little children to Christ she was fulfilling His own command, and, while engaged in that employment, would fear no opposition that could be raised against her. She persevered ; the good work went on ; one by one other ladies joined her in it, and, in course of time, their numbers so increased that M. d'Alet had the satisfaction of seeing this important undertaking, which he had so much at heart, fairly established. To increase the efficiency of these workers he arranged for them to make a stay at the episcopal town of Alet ten or twelve at a time ; he lodged them in the house of the good widow, who was constituted their maternal head, and devoted a portion of his time in training them and instructing them in the duties of their new employment. He drew up rules for their guidance and for those whom they were to instruct. The valuable lessons which they thus received from their bishop and pastor during their retreat in Alet so deeply sank into their hearts and increased their zeal

and love for the work, that not one of them could be persuaded to forsake it, and even those who had possessed a strong desire to assume the religious habit gave up all idea of preferring the quiet life of the cloister to the more laborious path of active usefulness now lying before them. The world, which had scorned, ridiculed, and criticised them, began to regard them with different feelings and to treat them with respect. The immense good which, in a short time, their labours effected throughout the diocese, under the direction and guidance of their bishop, drew upon them the praise and esteem of all right thinking people. The report of their work spread into the neighbouring dioceses, and applications came to M. d'Alet from all quarters for these excellent sisters to come and inaugurate similar works in other districts. The first application for these sisters came from Toulouse. Two were despatched thither, and began a similar work, which grew into such importance that it gave birth to an institution, to which one of the sisters, who possessed considerable means, gave a foundation, having a desire to render it permanent, and with this view formed the workers into a community by means of letters patent which she obtained for this purpose. Had she followed the wise counsels of our good bishop, who strongly opposed the project, much subsequent misfortune would have been averted.

"Communities," said M. d'Alet, "always degenerate, and do not long retain the spirit and devotedness of their founder." His piety and sound good sense convinced him that it was far better and safer to confine our carefulness and solicitude to whatever God presents to us day by day without disquieting ourselves about the future, than to carry our schemes so far into it as to oblige those who come after us to engage in the same undertakings. "A particular work," said he, "which may be most desirable and beneficial in our

own day, may very possibly in time to come be productive of much inconvenience. Let us be alive to the exigencies of each succeeding day ; let us do all the *present* good we can, that is all that God demands of us. As for the rest, let us commend it to His good Providence, confident that He will provide for it by ways and means which are unknown to ourselves, and which we have no right either to enquire into or anticipate."

Experience had proved to him the soundness of these maxims, and, acting upon this principle, M. d'Alet constantly resisted the importunities of several bishops who solicited him to obtain similar letters patent to found an order, and form these useful sisters into a permanent community, that so their valuable services might be perpetuated to succeeding generations. The applications for them became soon so numerous that he was obliged, for the sake of his own diocese, to cease sending them to distant places ; he offered, however, to receive into the house of the good widow any ladies whom they were desirous of sending to be trained and instructed. This nursery of Regents, for so these sisters were termed, received many young persons and widows from other dioceses for this purpose, and after they had passed through a course of instruction, and had been taught by the bishop how they ought to act in fulfilling this work of pure and disinterested love, he sent them into his own parishes to finish their probation by putting in practice the principles he had taught them.

As soon as he had obtained a sufficient number of workers he divided them into two classes. Those belonging to one of them were sent into the country, and remained during nine months of the year in the parishes where they were stationed. They ceased their labours during the season of harvest, in order that the children might be free to assist their parents in the work of getting in the crops. They

took advantage of this time of rest by assembling at the house in Alet, where, after enjoying a period of refreshment, they returned again to their labours with renewed energies both of mind and body. The other class remained at Alet with the good widow, and formed a species of reserve always ready to be sent wherever the bishop judged necessary ; and they again returned to the Home in Alet, where they were maintained partly at his expense, while the other class of Regents derived their subsistence from the parishes in which they laboured. Besides their ordinary duties, which were common to both, viz., teaching school and catechising the children daily, they assembled the married women and grown-up girls in the parish at a mid-day meeting, held every Sunday and on festivals, and gave them a lengthened instruction upon the duties of their station, the mysteries of the Christian faith, and the preparation necessary to approach worthily the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, also upon the duty of morning and evening prayers. They were also charged with the care of the poor and sick of the parish to which they were sent, and were the almoners of the good bishop, to whom they sent an account of the wants of the poor.

M. d'Alet prohibited the sisters from taking any vows. They were free at any time to leave their occupation. He was persuaded that the temptation to do so would be much greater and more dangerous when their liberty was gone than when they were left free. He left it all to their good will, but took care, by his instructions and the excellent rules he prescribed for them, to provide all that was necessary to enable them to persevere in their employment. He was the sole director of all who remained at the head quarters in Alet. The others, who were stationed in the country, were required to submit themselves to the direction of the clergyman of the parish under whom they worked. They

were sent out two and two, and were not allowed to work separately. All conversation with men was absolutely forbidden, and they were not permitted to be visited by any of the male sex. Their meals were to be plain and frugal, and their dress modest, their words few, all excessive talking was to be avoided, and not a single moment was to be unemployed. These simple rules they practised carefully.

Upon the idle and careless the influence of the lives and example of these sisters made a far deeper impression than their words produced. Several curés who had in the first instance taken offence when these sisters were sent into their parishes, have afterwards declared that they had done more good in three months among individuals of their own sex than they had been able to do during several years. The good which they thus effected extended to the men through the ministry of their wives, who came to the sisters for counsel in all their domestic troubles, and when they returned home related to their families all the good lessons they had learned from them.

It may be said of the labours of these sisters, that of all the works that this excellent bishop conceived and undertook for the spiritual welfare of his diocese, there was none upon which it pleased God to bestow a more abundant blessing than this. Upon the labours of these devoted women the benediction of God was bestowed in richest measure, the effects were marvellous, and their success infinitely surpassed M. d'Alet's most sanguine expectations.

A detailed account of the institutions and societies of Alet was communicated to the Mère Angélique de St. Jean, one of the Abbesses of Port Royal des Champs, by Claude Lancelot, the celebrated teacher in the Port Royal schools, on the occasion of a visit to Alet made by him at the close of the year 1667. Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, in her select memoirs of Port Royal, has woven this account with some

other materials into a charming narrative under the title of "A Tour to Alet." The following extract from these valuable and deeply interesting memoirs furnishes some particulars of this active Sisterhood. The instruction it conveys, and the possibility that it may afford some useful hints to the Sisterhoods of our own Church and day, the revival of which in increasing numbers and extending usefulness ought to be a subject of deepest thankfulness to every true Christian, must be the writer's apology for the length of the quotation :

"Good health, good sense, independent circumstances, conciliating manners, and deep piety are essentially requisite to gain admittance into the society of 'Regents.' Though many of these ladies are of high birth and fortune, and some of them of elevated rank, yet persons of every rank are equally accepted, though a competency is indispensable ; indeed, it is necessary that they should be of some independence, because the society is not endowed, and has no funds appropriated to its use like a convent. For though all live in one house, and are boarded at a common table, yet the expense is furnished by each one paying her quota. These ladies take no vows, yet they live much in the same way as religious orders ; they only maintain the laws of inclosure in their own house. There, as in nunneries, no men ever enter without an absolute necessity. They do not wear a monastic dress, yet they are all clothed exactly alike. They wear dark stuffs, which reach up close to the throat, with long sleeves down to the wrists ; their handkerchiefs also come close up to the throat, and their caps, which are very neat, cover the whole of their hair, excepting a little on the forehead, so that they are directly known in the street, whether they go out to visit the sick or to attend the services of the Church.

"The object of this society is peculiarly that of instructing and relieving their own sex ; it unites the offices of nursing

the sick, instructing the ignorant, and giving spiritual help to the distressed. Two of its most important aims are, teaching domestic management to poor families, and forming schools for girls. To accomplish these ends, each society of Regents has a large house at Alet, which may be termed its head quarters. Here the superior and prioress always reside, and are immediately under the bishop's inspection. They have with them an assistant committee, chosen half-yearly out of the whole society. Here all instructions are given by the bishop, and all orders are issued to the rest of the body, all information is received from them, and all their wants are supplied by the superior and committee. In this house is a very good library; it is composed of every work of piety and valuable information which can possibly be useful either to give or lend to any of their own sex, from the cottage to the palace.

"They have also an extensive apothecary's shop and surgery. All the sisters receive regular instruction in dressing wounds, nursing, and in mixing and dispensing medicines from the first professional men in the place. The upper storey of the house consists of one large magazine, stored with warm clothing, blankets, sheets, and everything which the poor and sick can want.

"They have also a very neat little chapel, plainly furnished with wooden benches; it has a sweet-toned organ, and many harps and lutes. Most of the ladies have not only sweet voices, but are perfect musicians; by this means the playing and singing is such that even the first connoisseurs might receive delight from the superior excellence of their performance.

"The sisters have not separate cells like nuns, but one large dormitory. Down each side are deep recesses, wide enough to contain a small bed, a book-shelf, a chair, and a table; in each recess is a window. At the entrance to

every one of these recesses is a thick woollen cloth curtain, which being let down leaves the sister in private, and deadens the sound which would otherwise be perceptible from so many people.

"The superior is a woman of fine understanding, great strength of mind, and great activity. She is highly respected by the whole society; indeed, the love, unity, and perfect intelligence which reign amongst all the members of this little community are truly admirable. The establishment I have now described is at Alet, where, I must observe, all the sisters spend about six months in every year. The whole community reside together from the week before Passion week till the middle of September. This season they devote to prayer, studying the Scriptures, working to supply the stock of clothes for the poor, nursing and instructing the people, and attending the lectures of M. d'Alet, thus preparing themselves for the winter campaign.

"Early in autumn the good bishop selects a large detachment of them, and appoints the district where they are to labour until the following Easter. Accordingly, in September, they set out for the country, where they pass the winter, this being, though the least convenient to them, the most favourable season for instructing the poor. In summer the poor are obliged to labour in the fields so assiduously that they have but little time for learning.

"As soon as the sisters reach the district appointed for the year, six of them go to the principal town, and take possession of a house provided on purpose for them by the bishop; the rest of the detachment proceed by two and two to houses appointed for them, in like manner, in all the villages circumjacent. In these houses the sisters remain the whole time. No man ever enters, nor do they ever go out but to chapel, and as it falls to the turn of each to visit the sick in the town. A medicine closet and clothes for the

poor are immediately provided, and they are supplied with every requisite from Alet. As soon as they arrive at any town they deliver a letter of recommendation to the principal clergyman in the place, and also an order from the bishop that he should give the whole town notice of their arrival. Accordingly, a printed paper is put up in the market place and in the corners of the streets, with an invitation to all females of every age and denomination to wait on them. In a large room appropriated for the purpose, they receive all the women and children who choose to come, and immediately begin a regular and settled plan of instruction, which fully occupies them from morning till night. The morning instruction is generally of a temporal and the evening of a spiritual character. One day in the week is devoted to teach the young women to cut out clothes to advantage, cheap cookery, and many things of the like nature. Every other day a school is held for the girls; they are instructed in reading, writing, working, and accounts. Part of every day is devoted to religious reading and catechetical instruction. It is expected that no book shall be read, nor any catechism used, which has not been prescribed by the bishop. The sisters are, however, expected to use their own discretion in commenting and applying their instructions to existing circumstances.

“At these meetings all their own sex are invited to be present; there are, however, other meetings, which are more particularly designed for those who have made further advances, or who have manifested a disposition entirely serious. In these they have readings of a more spiritual nature, to which they add exhortation and a little free spiritual conversation, in which each person, who is inclined, relates her experience or asks advice. Besides this, the sisters have, once a fortnight, private conversation with every individual who attends them; so that there is not a single person with

whose state of mind they are unacquainted. Once a month they all assemble from the neighbouring villages in their house in town. Here they give an account of their mutual labours, state their difficulties, encourage each other, arrange their plans for the ensuing month, and draw up a statement of their progress, and a catalogue of their wants, which is sent to the superior and committee at Alet, and is by them transmitted to the bishop. In this account every individual is mentioned, and it is by this means M. d'Alet acquires so intimate an acquaintance with his diocese.

"After the Regents have been two or three months at a place, and are well acquainted with the people, they make choice of some of the most pious and intelligent, whom they take into their house, and to whom they give instructions, to qualify them to conduct everything on the same plan after their departure. Wherever they have obtained a footing a permanent reform has mostly succeeded their labours.

"It is astonishing how much the Regents are beloved and respected. If they are seen in the streets, each one in passing is sure to pull off his hat ; nor seldom have I seen the roughest boors bless them with tears in their eyes. 'We had the Regents last year' is a sentence often pronounced with great exultation in the diocese of Alet. I have often seen the words 'The Regents are come' diffuse the same joy over a whole village as though it had been a public festival. The labours of these ladies are by no means solely confined to the poor ; those amongst the rich and noble, who want their advice, are perfectly at liberty to ask it, whilst they reside in the district. It has, nevertheless, been found necessary to make strict, or, rather, inviolable rules ; otherwise the accumulating multiplicity of acquaintance would subject them to a degree of intrusion which would effectually defeat the object of their labours ; consequently, they never allow, upon any pretext whatever, any corres-

pondence either by letter or visits with persons whose quarter they have left. Should any letter be sent, a short but polite answer from the superior states their rule and the reason for it, and the writer is referred to the established superintendent of the district ; nor is any intercourse resumed till, in the course of their rounds, they again return to the same place. With the superintendents and ladies' committees they keep up a constant communication. The bishop also takes care that they shall be regularly inspected by the clergyman of the place. On the Regents' return to Alet in the spring they render an account of all they have done ; they are peculiarly careful to mark all the errors and mistakes they have fallen into, and appoint solemn seasons of retirement, fasting, and prayer, to receive the Divine forgiveness.

"It is astonishing how great a blessing has accompanied the labours of these truly devoted women. Their footsteps throughout the diocese may be almost traced by the reformation visible. Perhaps few, since the days of the apostles, have better fulfilled the object they had in view, namely, a conformity, through a loving faith, to both the active and contemplative life of Christ.

"A gentleman, visiting at M. d'Alet's, who was much pleased with their union of activity and recollectedness, used often to smile and call them 'Sisters of the Order of Martha and Mary.' One of them replied, 'We do indeed desire to serve our Lord with cheerful Martha's busy hands, and to sit at His feet with Mary's loving heart ; yet, as our Lord Himself was the source of both Martha's industry and Mary's humiliation, if you will call us anything, we had rather it were, 'Sisters of the Order of the Love of Christ.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

Household of M. d'Alet—economy—intractable domestics—dispenses with domestic servants altogether—forms his household into a kind of brotherhood—its rules—entertainment of guests—keeping accounts—distribution of alms—Lent diet—his ideas on “property and inheritance”—a pestilence breaks out—conduct of M. d'Alet on this occasion—great mortality—heroism of some of the clergy—cowardice of others—the diocese invaded by troops of soldiers—villages burnt and ransacked—M. d'Alet expostulates, and obliges the officers to control their troops—his loyalty to the Crown.



UDGING from the zeal with which M. d'Alet laboured for the reform of his diocese, it may be easily imagined with what care he would regulate his own household and servants. He knew that to govern well the Church of God he ought to commence by putting his own house in good order (1 Tim. iii. 5), and that the regularity of a well-ordered household would greatly contribute to the public edification and to the reform he meditated. Before leaving Paris, he took great pains in selecting the servants which were to compose his household, engaging only those who had been well tried and proved. He called them his *family*, and explained to them his plans, with respect to their own personal conduct and the service he required of them. “You will greatly deceive yourselves,” said he to them, “if, in entering my service, you do so in the hope that my rank and position may afford you some advancement or good fortune; you ought to have no other aim than to profit by the spiritual succour and religious advantages which it would be my care to provide for you. I intend to make my house a kind of monastery, and my household will be a religious brotherhood, each member

of it occupying himself simply with the particular duty prescribed to him ; and it is my desire that the whole household should have no other thought than to edify the public by their piety, their modesty, their gentleness, and submission. My design is that you may show a practical example of those Christian truths in which it will be my duty to instruct my flock."

They all seemed pleased with the bishop's intentions, they entered into his views with apparent satisfaction, and submitted to his conditions. This did not, however, last very long ; they quite expected that his fervour would cool down, and that he would not long maintain the strictness of his regulations. They were deceived, and, to their disappointment, they found, that the pastoral vigilance increased daily, and that each day some new measure of household economy was devised, in order to enlarge the sum set apart for alms ; that separation from the world was continually impressed upon them, with the practice of continual prayer, and the necessity for their becoming models of piety. They fell off little by little, and at last absolutely rebelled ; they even leagued themselves together to oppose the ecclesiastic who had charge of their conduct. The impossibility of bringing them under control obliged the bishop to dismiss them all. He gave them an ample recompense, and payed the expenses of those who wished to return to Paris.

Finding it impossible to obtain religious servants, who would submit to the rules of his household, M. d'Alet at length resolved to receive none but those who had an inclination to enter the service of the Church. In a short time all the offices in his household were filled by young men destined to become candidates for the ministry. No service was deemed derogatory. They all wore a similar dress, made of dark brown stuff. To each was given a copy of the rules attached to his particular office in the house-

hold, besides the general rules of the establishment which were distributed to all. The time which was not occupied in serving, or in taking the recreation which was allowed them, was passed in study. The bishop regarded them as his children, and watched over them with the greatest care, and very soon the principal families in the country came and besought the bishop to take their children to serve in his household.

When these young men had passed a certain time in this service, some were sent to the schools in the country, and employed in teaching ; others, who showed signs of higher qualities, were placed in the seminary to be educated for the ministry, and thus, in after years, it has been found that many of the best clergy in the diocese had in early life performed domestic service in M. d'Alet's household. The very best education was given to them, and no monastery was better governed than this little family under the eye of the ecclesiastic who had charge of it. All intercourse out of the house was strictly prohibited. Every evening the porter rendered an account to the superior of all who had passed out and entered ; during meals each in their turn read a portion from some edifying book. From time to time the bishop conversed privately with each individual, to ascertain their dispositions and what progress they were making in spiritual things. He entered into all their difficulties temporal and spiritual, cheered them and counselled them, assuring them continually that he did not consider them as servants, but children whom God had given him to train them for His service and form them in virtue. He continually impressed upon the chief steward of the household and the cook to observe the strictest economy in all that belonged to their department, and to remember that the revenue of the house belonged to the poor and to the Church ; that neither he nor they had any right to more

than was sufficient for the simplest necessities, and that they would have their portion in the blessing of those alms which had been furnished by means of their diligent economy.

The whole household rose at five o'clock, and assembled at half-past five in the chapel for mattins, and all were present at the Holy Communion which was celebrated immediately afterwards. The household again assembled at eight o'clock in the evening for compline in the bishop's anti-chamber, after which all retired in silence, and not a word was allowed to be spoken except what pressing necessity might require. All games of chance were forbidden, but on Sundays and festivals some extra freedom was permitted, and innocent recreation was allowed until the hour of vespers, which was attended either in the cathedral or the parish church. No silly conversation or jesting was allowed in this little society, and if any little differences arose among its members, the superior, who was immediately informed of it, imposed some task upon the offenders to be performed before the end of the day. They were provided with clothes, linen, and every needful requisite, but were not allowed to dispose of anything; whatever they had no further use for was returned to the steward who had the charge of this duty.

An instance occurred when this rule was once broken by one of the members of the household. It is mentioned to show with what patience, sweetness, and forbearance M. d'Alet treated those who served him.

One day, when very much over-heated with the exertion of preaching, he returned home as quickly as he could, to save himself from taking cold. It was the porter's duty to open the door immediately upon the first knock, but on this occasion the bishop was kept waiting in the cold a quarter of an hour. The archdeacon who accompanied the bishop grew impatient, and, complaining of the porter's negligenc

continued knocking. "Let us wait patiently," said the bishop to him ; "we indeed see that he does not open the door, but we do not know what detains him ; he has, doubtless, some reason." The door was at length opened ; the bishop entered, and, without making the least complaint, gave the usual benediction. It was discovered on the morrow, that while the bishop was shivering in the cold the porter, instead of being at his post, was engaged in theft. The fault was pardoned, and, instead of punishing him, the bishop's only endeavour was, by a forgiving love, to bring him to repentance.

There was nothing more expressly enjoined upon the members of his household, and more carefully observed by them, than a due respect and reverence for the clerical order. This was a matter which M. d'Alet was particularly careful to enforce both by precept and example upon his domestics. All their little deficiencies and negligences in his service his charity overlooked, provided they were attentive and polite to his guests, which were very numerous. Whenever any of the clergy of the diocese had cause to visit the episcopal town they always lodged with the bishop. All the sick members of his clergy who he had any reason to think were deficient in home comforts, and needed care and attention, he sent for to his house. He tended them, sat with them, and consoled them. He gave the most minute orders for whatever he thought could add to their comfort, and would not allow them to return to their duties until perfectly convalescent.

M. d'Alet did not allow his time, which was continually occupied with spiritual matters, to be encroached upon with the cares of his revenues. He had, besides, no taste for figures and accounts, and understood very little about them. He therefore selected a man of business in whom he had entire confidence, and confided to him the care of his

revenues. With this individual, who received all the income and made all the payments, he associated one of the clerical members of his household as an auditor. At every year's end the accounts were made up, and a statement presented to M. d'Alet of the receipts and payments for the year, showing the balance in hand, to which the bishop appended his signature. This done, his next care was to fix upon sums to be appropriated, first for the maintenance of his household, for the entertainment of his guests, for the repairs of churches, for marriage portions for poor girls, for placing out children to learn trades, and for ordinary alms to be distributed among the families of the poor in the form of clothing, blankets, and other household necessities. He entered into all these details, and gave his instructions and advice. However extraordinary it may appear, it is declared to be a fact, that M. d'Alet was acquainted with every family in his diocese, and all who, advanced in years, were past work, he provided for. By this means, beggars were a thing unknown in the diocese of Alet; more especially was this the case in those districts of which he was the temporal lord, or in which Church property belonging to the see was situated; the poor in these places were more bountifully provided for than in others. "This property," he said, "has in a manner been taken from these poor people for our subsistence, and they have really more right to it than we have."

In times of dearth and scarcity the alms which this devoted and self-denying pastor distributed were increased by every possible means. He was ceaseless in finding out what expenses were not absolutely necessary in his household, and retrenchment was carried to its greatest limit short of ascetic severity. He was not of those prelates who believed that to maintain their rank and dignity a certain style must be kept up. In ordinary times his table was served as

frugally as that of the humblest citizen of Alet, while in times of public scarcity and distress herbs and vegetables sufficed for the simple wants of his household. At dinner it was M. d'Alet's rule never to sit longer than half-an-hour on any pretext whatever, and, being extremely abstemious, he was as ready for business after dinner as before. In the season of Lent they dined on nothing else than a little dried fish. When the distress of the poor was great through scarcity of provisions he has sold his best horses, and whatever else was saleable, to obtain food for them. In such times of pressing need as these he used great exertions to relieve those who were in want, and distributed his alms in every direction. He did not even confine these charitable endeavours to his own diocese. During a period of cholera which visited the city of Toulouse, M. de Ciron wrote to M. d'Alet describing the intense sufferings of the poor. M. d'Alet immediately sent him a large sum of money for their relief, accompanied with a valuable diamond, which had been left to him by his mother, and which he had applied to ornament the altar in his cathedral. At the higher call of love, he unhesitatingly applied this costly gift to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. On such occasions as these he would write to all his curés and beneficed clergy urging them to make every effort to send relief, and dwelling on the indispensable obligation they were under to provide assistance for those whose patrimony they enjoyed. These exhortations, sustained by his own noble example, were always successful, and all poured their alms into the hands of their bishop, who knew better than anyone else the wants of his numerous flock. "A bishop," he often said, "can never properly be termed rich, however great his revenues may be, since he is only the steward of them." He also added, "that those who, possessing Church property, seek to enrich their families with the patrimony of the poor, rarely

ever succeed in doing so ; sooner or later their families suffer loss, for wealth so gotten is never blessed, and they are in the end deprived of the means which have been so unjustly and so sacrilegiously appropriated."

An enemy to all covetousness, M. d'Alet was rigidly exact in all matters connected with property and inheritance. His eldest brother wrote to him soon after this event, to say, that after enjoying during life the portion of the family estate which he would inherit by right of succession, they all hoped he would leave it to his family again after his death. M. d'Alet, who felt deeply for the poor of his diocese, whom he regarded in the light of his own children, gave instructions to have all he inherited converted into money and sent to him to Alet. The sum amounted to forty thousand crowns, which he employed in works of charity, following the counsel contained in those memorable words of our Lord,—“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” His relatives, although religious people, could not help feeling very much disappointed that the bishop should thus dispose of the property which they hoped would return to them again ; but his firmness was immovable, and they were obliged to be content, besides which, he put the matter before them in so clear a light and so lovingly as to satisfy them completely. Thus the intimate and affectionate union which had always existed between himself and his brothers and sisters was never broken. In writing on this subject to his eldest brother, he told him that neither his own person nor anything he possessed was truly *his own*, but belonged to the Church ; that, since it had pleased God to give him an ample subsistence, he could not in conscience live upon the Church, unless he were one of Christ's poor, and which indeed he would be after he had laid all he possessed at His feet. He reminded him that our blessed Lord had left His

own mother to give Himself to His Church, and in like manner his ministers should no longer love their parents according to the flesh, but only in Jesus Christ. If his relations were in want it would be his duty to relieve them *first*,—they had the first claim upon him,—but this not being the case he should consider himself unworthy of the priesthood if he preferred the eminence and éclat of his family to the real necessities of the children which God had given him, and those necessities were very great. The poverty and wretchedness in the diocese was extreme. The family of the Pavillons, on the other hand, were very wealthy. It was not, therefore, unreasonable that he should bestow a portion of his goods in succouring the poor of his flock, for whom he had a real love, especially as his relatives had no need; nor could they have any claim to what would pass from them if their relative had pursued a secular calling. And if, to relieve the poor, he denied himself all the luxuries of life, and even what to many would be considered its necessities, was he to be blamed if on this occasion he used that liberty which the law allows all individuals to sell their property and dispose of the proceeds in any way they please?

Probably the zeal and self-devotedness of this admirable bishop were never more conspicuous than on the occasion of the pestilence, which visited his diocese in the year 1651, and swept away many of its inhabitants. The first report of this terrible scourge reached him in the little village of Annat, which he was visiting. He set off immediately for Alet, and thence proceeded without delay to Caudiez, a small village at the extremity of the diocese, where the pestilence had broken out. As he left Annat, the curate of that parish came and offered his services, having heard that the priest at Caudiez had no curate to assist him. The bishop tenderly embraced him, and testified the joy he felt at his self-devotion, and promised that he would send for

him if he found, on arriving at Caudiez, that his services would really be needed.

M. d'Alet, having reached Caudiez, halted in a field adjoining the village. No sooner did the people of the village learn that their bishop had come to their assistance than they turned out, old and young of both sexes, and came to meet him with the most lively demonstrations of joy and gratitude. The misery of their situation filled him with grief, and he exhorted them with all the force and tenderness he was able to be courageous, to seek earnestly the grace of true penitence, to mourn for their sins, and submit patiently to the will of God. Having exhorted them to lose not a moment in seeking pardon for their sins, that death if it should come might not find them unprepared, he promised all the assistance, spiritual and temporal, that was in his power, and sought out the principal inhabitants to concert with them measures for the general safety. He fixed upon a spot a little out of the village where the people might attend the celebration of the Holy Communion without danger, and carefully impressed upon the clergyman of the place the necessity of taking every precaution to assure himself that every individual to whom he administered the Sacrament possessed the essential requisites of faith and repentance. The fatherly character of the good bishop is very notably displayed in this visitation of cholera. His diocese was to him as a large parish, and his labours of love are a proof of his conviction that a *personal* acquaintance with his people was as necessary to him as to a parish priest.

As soon as he had given the requisite instructions for disinfecting the town and arresting the progress of the malady, he proceeded to the neighbouring town of Saint Paul, about six miles distant, in a district over which the bishops of Alet possessed seignorial rights, and bade the villagers send whatever succour they could to their suffering neighbours in

Caudiez, and gave orders that they should send him word every day of the state of this afflicted village. It was not long before the pestilence reached Quillan, one of the most considerable towns in the diocese, and from thence it spread to several other parishes. The bishop followed it everywhere, visiting the infected hamlets and villages, not excepting the solitary farm houses that fell under the scourge, and he placed in constant requisition a visiting band of clergy whom he sent wherever he himself could not come and wherever they were most wanted, and with indefatigable perseverance he provided for the wants of the humblest of his flock.

The town of Alet, having escaped this visitation, took alarm lest the bishop and his clergy, who exposed themselves everywhere, should bring infection to their town in going and returning, and were loud in their complaints. As soon as M. d'Alet heard of it, he called a general meeting of the inhabitants and told them that every possible precaution was taken to avoid the danger they feared, but that as chief pastor it was his solemn duty to provide for the wants of his flock, and if they continued their complaints he should not exercise that authority to quiet them which was in his power, but would rather quit the town altogether, and take up his residence with those who needed him. There was no occasion to add another word ; every murmur ceased, for the idea of losing their bishop was a greater calamity to them, than the pestilence itself, and they quite believed that it was the presence of the bishop, whom they regarded as their tutelary saint, that had caused the town to escape its ravages. Saint Paul de Fenouille was the last town in the diocese that was attacked by this fearful scourge ; in no place had it raged so violently, and in spite of all the bishop's efforts to allay its fury, one half of the inhabitants perished, and the staff of clergy were soon

reduced to two in number, one of whom was M. de Montredon, a canon, and the other a prebendary of the chapter. M. de Montredon, with a noble self-devotion, undertook the care of all those who were infected by the disease, leaving the rest who were in health to the care of the prebendary. He was one of the number of the pluralists who when M. d'Alet first arrived in the diocese held livings in addition to their canonries, but was one of the first who submitted to the regulations of the bishop in this matter, during the period of his retreat in the seminary of Alet, from which he derived great spiritual benefit. While there his heart was so deeply touched by God, that he wholly confessed and unbosomed himself to the bishop, and placed himself entirely under his direction. During the prevalence of this pestilence, he gave proof of the purest charity, and self-devotion, and of a zeal that was indefatigable.

Entirely regardless of himself, his only thought was to carry succour and consolation in every possible way to the sick and dying who had need of his ministry. When the increasing violence of the plague rendered it unsafe to convey any longer into the market-place those who were attacked, or to open the doors of the houses in which the inmates barricaded themselves, this devoted servant of God provided himself with a ladder, with which he gained entrance at the windows of the sick and dying, brought them medicine and nourishment, and administered to them the last Sacraments. When the severity of the scourge had passed away and was rapidly declining, he lost the young man who attended him, and soon after he was himself attacked with the disease. With an exalted courage he persevered to the last, and, though very ill and weak, continued to administer the Sacrament to those who had not yet received it. At last his strength failed him, and feeling himself sinking, he once more celebrated the Holy Mysteries,

with his own hand administered to himself the last Sacraments, and the same evening passed to his reward, and entered eternal rest, a martyr of Christian love.

There were two of the clergy who failed in their duty during this time of calamity. On the first breaking out of the pestilence they deserted their posts and took flight. M. d'Alet was grieved that the necessity which required him to be continually visiting the infected districts prevented him taking their duties upon himself. He sent a faithful member of his clergy to take their place, and issued a public ordonnance enjoining these deserters to return immediately to their post under pain of excommunication.

On no occasion is the presence of a faithful pastor more urgently required than in times of great public calamity, when the people whom God has given into his charge have most need of that spiritual succour which he is under the obligation of conveying to them. It is at such times as these that the good shepherd, following in the footsteps of his Lord and Master, will give his life for the sheep, while the *hireling* will abandon them and take flight in order to save his own.

Happily the two villages thus abandoned suffered very slightly, and the emissary who was sent to their relief was able to return to Alet in a couple of days. The two clergymen who had abandoned their posts were themselves abandoned of God. One of them fell into the greatest disorders, was arrested, and condemned to be imprisoned for life. The other was deprived of his benefice, and sentenced to other canonical penalties.

War, with its attendant evils, was another calamity which for a long period ravaged the diocese of Alet, and again was the paternal care of its unwearied bishop nobly manifested in his exertions to prevent or to ameliorate its evil consequences to his flock. During the year 1653, while France

was at war with Spain, the diocese of Alet was overrun with French troops who were on the march to Rousillon. The Spaniards held possession of the Castle of Puivaldor, situated at the extremity of the diocese, and which was retaken by the French under the command of the Prince of Conti. Dislodged from this fortress, the Spaniards, on their retreat, burned and ransacked a number of villages. Word having been sent to M. d'Alet, he instantly set off to this scene of desolation, consoled the sufferers, provided them with necessities, and watched over the safety of the women and children in the localities occupied by an unlicensed soldiery. He journeyed from place to place to ascertain the nature and extent of the misery which had overtaken this portion of his territory, and found in the neighbourhood of Capsir many of the villages abandoned by the inhabitants. Beseeching the French officers to burn nothing, and night approaching, he took refuge in the deserted house of the curé, which he found stripped of everything that could be carried off. Here he reposed for the night, setting fire to some straw to give light. It was a new thing to the French officers to see a bishop undergo such fatigue and privation in seeking his dispersed flock. They were greatly delighted and much struck with his conduct, and testified to M. d'Alet their respect and veneration for his character in the warmest manner. They provided him with food and promised to pay the strictest deference to his wishes while they remained in his diocese, and assured him that they would not allow the soldiers to destroy anything.

He learned, however, on his arrival at Rouze, while returning home, that the soldiers had set fire to a house in the parish of Artignes, where he had lodged. Upon hearing of this, he requested M. d'Angiers, his grand vicar, who accompanied him, to go and seek the commanding officer, and ask him to make pecuniary compensation for the damage. The

grand vicar, surprised that M. d'Alet should think there was any probability of soldiers paying for damage done in an enemies country, represented to him the inutility of such a mission. "Go, my dear brother," returned the bishop, "leave that to my judgment. The spirit of obedience should furnish you with the hope of success." He obeyed, and was received by the commanding officer with great civility, and was paid the price of the house upon his own valuation.

While M. d'Alet was thus engaged in repressing the license of the soldiery by enlisting the goodwill of their officers, a lawless gang, belonging to his own people, seized the opportunity to pillage, attributing their devastations to the Spanish soldiery. M. d'Alet took the severest measures to put a stop to their proceedings. He caused the strictest investigations to be made to ascertain the extent of the plunder, and obliged the culprits to restore everything. Those, also, who had purchased any article thus attained were obliged to make restitution. The passage of the troops of the Count d'Harcourt, a very undisciplined body of men, through the diocese, in which they committed great disorders, sorely tried the courage and resolution of M. d'Alet. Passing the episcopal town, they attempted to lodge themselves indiscriminately wherever they pleased. This M. d'Alet would not permit, and forbade them entering the town at all, and obliged them to make a circuit around it. They marched on to the town of Saint Paul, where they lodged themselves, committing great disorders. Upon hearing this, M. d'Alet wrote to their commander and set out instantly for Saint Paul to put a stop to the excesses of these undisciplined soldiers. Irritated with having been locked out of the town of Alet, they obtained the keys of Saint Paul from the municipal authorities, and, in their turn, locked out the bishop who had now arrived with his attendants before the gate. Seeing how


matters stood, he descended from his horse, and, with the most perfect composure, ordered the soldier who kept guard to open him the gate. Receiving only an insolent refusal, he seized the soldier by the shoulder belt, and, in a resolute tone, commanded him instantly to obey, adding that he was a bold man to bar the entrance of a town against its lord and bishop, demanded his name, and threatened him with severe punishment if he did not immediately open the gate. The soldier, astonished at the courage of this intrepid bishop, whose grave and majestic air impressed him with a feeling of respect, begged his forgiveness, and called to the guard within to open the gates. The officer in command, apprised of the bishop's arrival, came with excuses, offering him the keys. The bishop refused to receive them, and bade him return them immediately to the proper authorities, from whom they had been forcibly taken, and make proper reparation for his misconduct. While this officer, confounded with the firm tone of the offended bishop, tried in all ways to make amends, a letter arrived from the Count d'Harcourt, conveyed by one of his aides-de-camp, apologizing for the misconduct of the troops, offering to punish severely the insolent guard who had refused to open the gate, and assuring the bishop that orders should be given to reimburse the inhabitants for all the expenses they had unjustly suffered.

M. d'Alet, who looked upon these soldiers as sheep without a shepherd, extended towards them his paternal care during the time they remained quartered in his diocese. His friendly intercourse with the officers, who respected and feared him, gave him great power over the soldiers, and rendered him, in a measure, master of them, and he took care to turn this to good account for their benefit. No more complaints were heard of extortion on their part, and they paid regularly for whatever they obtained from the inhabitants.

During the civil wars of 1649 and the following years, M. d'Alet gave many proofs of his loyalty to the throne and fidelity to his sovereign in exacting obedience to the orders of the Government by keeping in the path of duty those who were desirous of joining the popular cause, and imposed public penances on many young men who had served in the revolutionary army of the Prince of Condé. He also obliged several of the chief families in his diocese, who had enlisted their vassals in the revolutionary enterprises, and had been killed or wounded, to make ample compensation to their widows and children. The court was always so assured of M. d'Alet's inviolable attachment to the throne, that his loyalty was never called in question, even during the displeasure which he gave the Government by the course he took in the matter of the "Regale," about which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. His opposition in this matter never lost him the respect and good offices of the ministers of State, the generals of the army, or the lieutenants of the province of which the diocese of Alet was a portion, and they have all given him, on various occasions, marks of the great consideration and esteem they entertained for him. So satisfied were they of the justice of any complaint or application he had occasion to make to them, that, without examination, they would give orders to have done immediately whatever he required. They begged him to make use of their services, that they might have part, as they said, in his good works, by aiding him in maintaining that good discipline which he had established in his diocese, and which was not only a blessing to his own people, but edifying to the whole Church.

CHAPTER XIV.

Visits the neighbouring bishops—preaches an octave of sermons for the Archbishop of Toulouse—lectures to young men preparing for Ordination—M. de Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers—Port Royal—Antoine Arnauld—the book of “Frequent Communion”—public penance—letter of M. d’Alet to M. Vincent de Paul—close friendship between the bishops of Alet and Pamiers—M. Rebé, Archbishop of Narbonne—mission to Narbonne—revival of religion—mission to Limoux—and Rhodéz—retreats for the clergy—reconciles a dispute in a religious community—death of M. Rebé, Archbishop of Narbonne.

 HE labours of this active servant of God were not confined to his own diocese. His zeal for the general good led him to improve all opportunities for usefulness that presented themselves in the course of his ministry, and it will be the object of the present chapter to give some account of the intercourse he had with neighbouring bishops, and the journeys he undertook to render service to them whenever it pleased God to place occasion in his way.

Soon after entering upon his episcopate he paid a visit of respect to M. de Montchal, Archbishop of Toulouse, who pressed him to preach a course of sermons in his cathedral during the octave of the feast of the Holy Sacrament. M. d’Alet willingly consented; the cathedral was crowded, and the earnest eloquence of his appeals made a deep impression. The members of the Parliament of Toulouse, as well as the civil authorities, all of whom he visited, were delighted with the simplicity and modesty of this humble-minded prelate, who dispensed with the pomp and display

with which bishops usually made visits of ceremony. It was a new thing to them to see a dignitary of his rank and position pay his visits on foot, accompanied by his chaplain and a single servant, but, far from lessening his dignity in the eyes of the citizens of Toulouse, the modesty of his retinue drew from them a far deeper respect and admiration than he would have received had he travelled in a chariot with his attendants in livery.

The discourses of M. d'Alet, and the influence of his piety, made a lasting impression upon the archbishop, who was delighted to find how valuable a neighbour he possessed, and he resolved to draw all the succour he could from him, not only for his personal benefit but for the good of his diocese. In order, therefore, to enter with him more deeply into these subjects, the archbishop invited M. d'Alet, a short time afterwards, to pay another visit to Toulouse, and deliver a course of lectures to a number of young men who were preparing for Ordination. M. d'Alet readily complied, and profited by the occasion to impress upon his auditors the true nature, dignity, and weighty responsibilities of the priesthood in the Church of Christ. He spoke with such force and clearness of the holiness of this high office, and of those dispositions of heart necessary for those who would enter upon it, that they were deeply moved, and several of them, trembling at the magnitude and importance of the truths which he displayed to them in the clearest light, resolved to defer their Ordination to a later period, to assure themselves more certainly that God had really called them to the office of the ministry, and to give themselves time for deeper care and preparation before they entered upon it.

The great amount of good which resulted from the lectures of M. d'Alet on this occasion induced the archbishop to ask him to repeat them on subsequent periods of Ordination, and M. d'Alet, who had deeply at heart the reformation of

the clergy, willingly consented to perform a service to which it seemed to him that it pleased God to open the way by bestowing upon it so visible a blessing on the first occasion. His reputation, having travelled far beyond Toulouse, drew crowds of ecclesiastics to that city to hear him. The archbishop's private chapel, in which his first lectures were given, was found too small to hold the numbers that sought admission, and it was necessary to adjourn to a more spacious building. The archbishop, again deeply moved by his persuasive eloquence, the purity of his doctrine, and the holiness of his life, sought only how he might turn to the best account every moment of M. d'Alet's visit. He consulted him on the various points of doctrine and discipline upon which the clergy of his extensive diocese held various opinions, and which were fruitful sources of division among them.

The greater number of the clergy, led away by the specious reasoning of the casuistical writers of that day, whose pernicious principles they had adopted, fearfully abused the authority of binding and loosing committed to the priesthood by the laying on of hands. They gave absolution without discretion or discernment, exercising no careful endeavours to ascertain whether a sincere and genuine repentance and deep sorrow for sin, accompanied by a true preparation of heart, had qualified the applicants for this great blessing. Thus was this duty turned into a mockery; and this ordinance of our Lord, so full of blessing when rightly used, and the appointed means of conveying his loving forgiveness to his erring but contrite children, abused into a positive evil, and made a snare and deception to the impenitent sinner, to whom there could be no real forgiveness while there was no true conversion of the heart to God.

On these subjects, therefore, M. d'Alet conferred with

a great number of the clergy, whom the Archbishop of Toulouse had assembled to hear him, and spoke to them with such power and unction, that he won them over to the truth, and they received his teaching with the greatest docility. He profited by this opportunity to put them in the way to labour with success in their missionary enterprises, which he counselled them to pursue, and instructed them in the method we have already described as adopted in the diocese of Alet.

The Archbishop of Toulouse, upon whom the life and character of his new friend, whom he regarded as a saint, had a powerful influence, believed he could not do better, in order to labour seriously in the work of his own personal sanctification, than to place himself under his spiritual direction; and from the moment he did so he began to regulate his household upon the principles of Christian self-denial and simplicity, to reduce the superfluity of his table and retinue, to reform his diocese, and to prepare to render up an account of his administration to that Sovereign Judge, before whom his advanced age warned him he must very soon appear. The faults committed during his episcopate weighed heavily upon his conscience, and, in order to repair the consequences of them in every way he could, he resolved to make application for M. d'Alet to be his coadjutor and successor. He accordingly communicated with the Court on this subject, and exerted all his influence to press his demand, which, he was informed, could not be accorded except by his own resignation of his archbishopric. M. d'Alet, whose attachment to his own church of Alet was indissoluble, and, besides, disapproving strongly of translations, no sooner heard of these negotiations than he opposed them with all his power, and engaged his friends to join their prayers with his own that the project might be frustrated.

It pleased God to grant their request. The archbishop was called from the present life before he had accomplished the resignation he had resolved to make after the State session which was then assembling at Carcassonne, where this prelate was seized with the illness of which he died.

M. de Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers, nominated to that diocese in the year 1644, was one of those firm friends to whom M. d'Alet was deeply and intimately attached. They had met in Paris on various occasions. On the appointment of M. de Caulet to the diocese of Pamiers, which borders upon that of Alet, one of the first things he did upon his arrival was to visit his former acquaintance, whose growing reputation was already drawing upon him the eyes of all classes in Church and State. It was about this time that the great religious controversy of the seventeenth century, which arose within the bosom of the Gallican Church, dated its commencement. Its origin was in the celebrated monastery of Port Royal, in which a complete reform to the primitive piety and severe rule of the earlier and better days of these religious communities had just been effected by the persevering efforts of its devoted abbess, La Mère Angèlique Arnauld. In a peaceful and secluded valley, a few miles to the south-west of Versailles, overgrown with ferns and ivy and a profusion of wild plants, may still be seen the remains of this once famous abbey. The small portion that still exists of the hard porous limestone used in its erection effectually resists the action of time and weather, and preserves to the present day a monument to the memory of that little band of saints, who, two centuries ago, hallowed its sacred precincts by their holy lives; but a more enduring monument is to be found in their history and their writings, and these offer to our own dear country and people an example and lesson we should do well to follow, of the purest

self-devotion and the most exalted piety. Besides the inmates of the monastery, this religious society comprised a number of recluses, among whom were some of the brightest intellects of France. It had pleased God in His mercy to touch their hearts, and, deeply impressed with the sense of the vanity of worldly pursuits and aims, and with eager aspirations after heavenly things they left all and retired to the peaceful solitude of Port Royal to pass the rest of their days in continual prayer and in acts of piety and devotion. Unlike many of the reformed churches who have nobly witnessed for some lapsed doctrine of truth, but who, at the same time, while protesting against the increasing corruptions of the Church, have separated themselves wholly from Her Communion, the Port Royalists clung to her with an attachment from which nothing could alienate them ; and while in their lives and teaching they revived the glorious fundamental truth of "justification by faith in the alone merits of a crucified Redeemer," and were its faithful witnesses and exponents in their day, they yet did so (and let this be particularly observed) in harmonious combination with another class of truths ;—the work of grace in the soul of the individual believer, through the operation of the Holy Spirit by which the old and fallen nature is gradually destroyed by means of the sharp discipline of the Cross, and the new nature regenerate in Holy Baptism, grows up and is nourished in the likeness of Christ.

Thus, during that eclipse of faith and holiness which overspread with darkness the Church of France in their day, a light burst forth in the peaceful valley of Port Royal, which burned with increasing brightness during a period of about a century, diffusing its rays in every direction, until the persevering hostility of the Jesuits, who from the first had endeavoured by every means to oppose and destroy this faithful band of witnesses for the truth, succeeded at last in extin-

guishing it, and a spiritual darkness succeeded even greater than before.

It has been previously intimated that M. d'Alet had received his early training in the seminary of Saint Lazarre. M. de Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers, had been educated in that of Saint Sulpice, distinguished at a somewhat later period for having numbered among its students the pious and amiable Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai. In neither of these two schools of theology did the Port Royalists meet with any sympathy, and both M. d'Alet and M. de Caulet had received in consequence, very unfavourable ideas of their teaching, with this difference, however, that M. de Caulet, strongly prejudiced against them, could not endure to hear even their name mentioned, while M. d'Alet, wholly free from prejudice, and without attaching himself to either one side or the other, took advantage of the good which he found in both. He was at this time reading a work by a writer of Port Royal, which had just issued from the press; it was from the pen of Antoine Arnauld, doctor of the Sorbonne, and was entitled "Frequent Communion." Its appearance produced a great sensation, and it was immediately attacked by the opposite party. In spite of the opposition it met with, it produced, nevertheless, a great effect, and numbers of eminent persons owed their conversion to God to its perusal. M. d'Alet was delighted with it, but, as the members of Saint Sulpice had openly declared against it, on the arrival of the Bishop of Pamiers he laid it aside, to avoid giving any offence to his new friend, with whom he wished to live in unity and love. Having similar aims, and being both penetrated with a deep desire for the good of the Church, a great friendship sprung up between these two bishops, which was strengthened by their mutual visits, and a continual correspondence of letters. M. de Pamiers would undertake nothing for the government of his diocese before

he had consulted M. d'Alet. He sent his clergy to be trained in his seminary, and relied upon his judgment as regarded their talents and vocation.

The commencement of the great controversy, which arose on the subject of the five famous propositions attributed to Jansenius, drew closer the ties of friendship and union between these two bishops. A letter had been drawn up condemning these five propositions, and it was designed to forward it to the Pope, after it had received the signatures of the bishops of France. No sooner had M. de Pamiers received a copy of this letter than he set off immediately to deliberate with M. d'Alet, who had also received a similar letter. After joining in fervent prayer to God to bestow upon them such a measure of light and wisdom that they might determine upon the right course to take in this affair, they resolved that they would neither sign the document, nor take any part in the angry contests which were disturbing the Church's peace. M. d'Alet had received a copy of this document from his old friend M. Vincent, of Saint Lazarre, who not only pressed him to sign it, but took occasion to speak strongly against the book of "Frequent Communion," hoping to gain him over to the large and increasing party which was then forming in Paris to procure its condemnation. It may be well to say a word or two here on this book which had so stirred the wrath and opposition of the Jesuits, and those who were attached to their opinions. It was less remarkable as a production of any great merit in itself as in its happy suitability to the special needs of that day and country. It is thus alluded to by a late writer on Port Royal:—"The work of Dr. Arnaud, upon 'Frequent Communion,' deplored the levity with which too many persons approach that sacred mystery. It urged the necessity of a real cessation from sin, and an heartfelt desire to relinquish evil tastes and practices previous to

absolution. It maintained that a true and genuine repentance, although a life-long work, must at least be begun, and a living faith manifested, as essential qualifications before receiving the Lord's Supper, and that no repentance could be termed evangelical which arose solely from a fear of punishment unmixed with a true desire after holiness and the love of God. The whole was enriched and supported by ample quotations from the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church."

M. d'Alet could not fail to see in its pages the spirit of a deep and enlightened piety, and to recognize the same principles which the Spirit of truth had communicated to his own soul, and which he had laboured to inculcate upon his clergy. In replying, therefore, to the letter of M. Vincent, and stating the reasons why he could not sign the letter condemnatory of the work of Jansenius, which he had never seen or read, he thus spoke of the book of "Frequent Communion." "I have read this work," he writes, "very carefully, and am much edified by its doctrine, and I must tell you, in all simplicity, that I esteem it to be a work of great usefulness, calculated to promote a sincere reverence for the doctrine of penance and the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and a fruitful reception of both, as also to benefit the priesthood by instructing them in a right and worthy administration of the Sacraments, very much needed in this day, when one considers the amount of ignorance in the clergy, and how generally inexperienced they are in the important and necessary duty of the direction of souls. With regard to the objection that the author appears to advocate the re-establishment of the rigorous and ancient discipline of the Church, it seems to me, that no one who would calmly read the work, could fail to perceive that its intention is merely to exhibit the beauty and severity of the ancient discipline, to excite a desire to reform the abuses of our age, of which we must

all be very conscious, and to defend the cause of those persons who are now being condemned for voluntarily submitting themselves to some of the holy practices which were followed by the penitents of primitive times. This does not seem to me to be at all worthy of blame."

The bishop concludes his letter by stating, that the reason why he had established the practice of public penance in his diocese, was in consequence of [the gross and scandalous public sins which were prevalent, and as the best way of effectually dealing with them ; that these penances had been happily productive of great good and spiritual profit to the people, insomuch that many neighbouring prelates had been led to adopt the same custom in their dioceses. "In thus acting," he concludes, "we have kept ourselves aloof from all *party feeling* in the Church, taking care neither to wound nor condemn any person, testifying both in public and private our love for all, on which side soever they may choose to range themselves in this unhappy contest, and our desire to esteem and serve them ; and we have always believed that it would be a very easy thing to bring them to one mind, if only they would cease to be prejudiced against each other, for we know of several pious and learned Jesuits who heartily approve of the doctrine which is taught in this book of 'Frequent Communion.'"

The fruit of the intercourse which was thus commenced between these two neighbouring Bishops of Alet and Pamiers, was soon apparent in the gradual removal of those prejudices from the mind of the latter, which he had contracted in the school of St. Sulpice, and in the clearer view of those truths which he, as yet, but very imperfectly realised. He discovered in M. d'Alet so much good sense, prudence, and uprightness, such an entire freedom from all party spirit, added to which so much docility of mind, simplicity, and candour, joined to a sincere love of truth, and an *unconquer-*

able firmness in maintaining it when once found, that it won his heart, and constrained him to give to M. d'Alet his entire confidence. He laid open his whole heart to him without reserve, communicated all his designs, and undertook nothing without the advice and approbation of his excellent friend.

Among the bishops of the province of Languedoc, was one whose friendship M. d'Alet was especially desirous to possess. This was M. de Rebé, Archbishop of Narbonne, and Metropolitan of Alet. He was a man of high birth, and his style of living resembled more that of a temporal lord than an evangelical bishop. His great endeavour was to maintain the good-will of the government of France, and his complaisance and docility in conforming to the wishes of the Minister of State procured for him even more credit than his high birth. M. d'Alet felt that a good understanding with his metropolitan, and the possession of his confidence, was important in the carrying out of his designs for re-establishing good order in his diocese, and also for the general well-being of the entire province. An intimacy, in consequence, soon commenced between them, which at the outset was full of promise for the future, and several mutual visits were paid, during which M. d'Alet took the opportunity of exciting the zeal of M. de Rebé to begin a work of reform among his clergy, to establish seminaries for the instruction of ecclesiastics, and organise a series of missionary visitations among the country parishes. The archbishop listened to these proposals with pleasure. He had heard of the reputation M. d'Alet had acquired at Toulouse by his stirring discourses, and the excellent instructions he had given to the ecclesiastics of that diocese, and, wishful that his own should enjoy the same advantages, he begged him to commence a similar work in Narbonne, and to aid him in carrying it out. The way being thus opened, M. d'Alet threw his whole heart into the work. He paid

several visits to Narbonne, and laboured with so much success that, in a short time, the clergy of that diocese, whom he found were more docile than those of Toulouse, were roused to exertion. He established conferences of the clergy similar to those of Alet, and set on foot missionary enterprises for carrying the Gospel message to the most neglected parts of the diocese. He joined to these some of his own tried workers, and from time to time accompanied them himself. Thus, labouring like the primitive bishops of the early days of the Christian Church to win souls for Christ, he inspired his companions with zeal to share in these truly apostolic labours. They were very greatly blessed, and a revival of religion in the diocese of Narbonne was the result which followed.

The success of the mission to Limoux deserves especial notice. Limoux is a small town in the diocese of Narbonne, at the foot of the Pyrenees, at that period thickly populated, and in a state of great spiritual destitution. On the arrival of the little company of missionaries, consisting of the Bishop of Alet and his companions, the inhabitants of Limoux, excited by the novelty of the spectacle, (no such thing having been known as a bishop, accompanied by a band of clergy, visiting their town and country preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom,) flocked in crowds from far and near to listen to the preachers. By the blessing of God the unction of their appeals produced a marvellous effect; many hearts were touched, numbers were brought to realize their lost condition, to feel sin's heavy burden, and to call upon God for mercy through the merits of a crucified Redeemer. A solid work was done here; and abundant was the fruit which bore witness to the genuineness of the conversion of the heart to God, and never did greater success result from the labours of M. d'Alet than on this occasion. Light broke in upon the darkness, and the fruit of good works testified

to the life which had been *revived* by the mercy of God in the souls of many. The general licentiousness which prevailed before this missionary visit took place, in a great measure, ceased ; the wicked practice of usury, which was very general, declined ; numbers of the inhabitants became attentive and regular in their religious duties ; scandalous offenders submitted themselves with docility to the public penances which were imposed upon them ; the practice of family prayer, morning and evening, was generally established ; a sisterhood of ladies was formed, who devoted themselves to works of mercy, in attending to, and relieving the sick poor, and with a view also to render permanent the reform, which had been, by the blessing of God, so happily commenced. M. d'Alet also took care to instruct the clergy in the best mode of conveying instruction by catechism and sermons ; he also left them a great number of short printed tracts, which contained not only a variety of prayers, but a plain and clear explanation of the principal mysteries of religion, to be distributed among the people, in order that they might have before their eyes both what they ought to believe, and what they ought to practise.

The report of these proceedings brought applications to M. d'Alet to extend his labours to other places. The blessings which had been so abundantly shed at Limoux had reached the ears of M. de Noailles, Bishop of Rhodéz, great uncle of Cardinal Noailles, Archbishop of Paris. He besought M. d'Alet to allow his zeal to extend as far as the diocese of Rhodéz. M. d'Alet lost no time in responding to this appeal, and devoted the whole period of an Advent to the undertaking. It was followed by the same success with which all his labours were attended.

It has been beautifully said that the very *burning* of the lamp consumes the oil ; hence, it has been found, that even amongst Christians of high attainments, the expedience of

those aids for gaining fresh supplies of the oil of God's grace, which have been furnished by retreats, have been very great. Knowing from experience the value of these helps, M. d'Alet established a retreat at Rhodéz, where, from time to time, its clergy might enjoy, in rest and quiet, a closer communion with God, and, by prayer and meditation, derive fresh supplies of grace and unction, and, refreshed in spirit, re-commence with renewed energy, their ministerial duties. After many conferences with M. de Noailles, upon the best mode of conducting and governing his diocese, he returned home, diffusing instruction and edification in those places in his route in which he had to make any stay.

It may be interesting here to mention a circumstance, in which the services of M. d'Alet were brought into requisition, to moderate the disputes which had arisen in a large and important community who styled themselves "The Fathers of the Congregation of Christian Doctrine." Among these Fathers, a division had taken place on the subject of the validity of their vows. To such lengths did they proceed, that the Pope had to interfere, and, with a view to reconcile the differences, nominated the Archbishop of Narbonne and the Bishop of Alet to examine the case and pronounce a definite judgment. The latter prelate laboured assiduously, as his custom always was, to gain the hearts of the contending parties and bring them to one mind, so as to spare the one side the pain of a judgment which might be given in favour of the other. This delicate consideration was rewarded. In virtue of the Pope's brief, these two prelates presided over a general Chapter of the Order, which was held at Narbonne in the year 1646, and, by the patience and gentleness with which they conducted the proceedings, brought all the differences to a peaceful issue; and, according to a pious custom, practised by the members of this congregation, the dissentients confessed

their error upon their knees, and humbly acknowledged their faults. M. d'Alet instantly seized the occasion to speak upon this practice of humility, and, for the space of half an hour, he rivetted the attention of the assembly with the force of an eloquence that came spontaneously from the heart. He took occasion to describe the true spirit of love with which the self-accused should always be listened to, and with what temper of mind and heart all ought thus to accuse themselves, and practise this kind of humiliation before their brethren, following the advice of the apostle, "Confess your faults to one another," (James 5, vi.). Every ear hung upon his words, every heart was touched, and the chiefs of the assembly were solicitous that the words might be committed to writing. As they were unpremeditated, he was unable to comply with their request. They were long remembered, however, and spoken of with admiration. Thus to every true lover of God and follower of our Lord, opportunities will, from time to time, occur, in which he may, by a happy improvement of them, advance the cause of his Saviour in witnessing for the truth. The true lover of Jesus will be ever on the watch for such opportunities. Even the smallest occasions he may make great. "A word spoken in due season how good is it!" (Prov. 15, xxiii.). It will ever be his aim to excite in his auditors the sentiments of that piety with which he is himself filled. The greatest gifts of eloquence, unaccompanied by the Spirit of God, will attempt this in vain. The finest orator can only draw from his hearers the admiration of his talents, he cannot touch the heart, for of that the Holy Spirit alone is the master.

The constant endeavour of M. d'Alet to cultivate the friendship of his metropolitan, and the valuable services he rendered him, on every occasion, for the good of his Church, was well calculated to cement a union as intimate as that which had grown up between our prelate and the Archbishop

of Toulouse. Unfortunately, M. de Rebé was a man of very different disposition to the latter. An accomplished courtier; he expected to receive the same deference and worship which he himself was accustomed to yield to the great personages at Court, and could not bear the slightest opposition. It was impossible for a man of his character to remain long on friendly terms with one who, with all his charity, and sweetness of disposition, and every possible politeness, knew neither how to dissimulate or temporise when duty called him to speak and to be firm. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that a coolness ensued between these two prelates. The exactitude of M. d'Alet offended the bishop, who also felt annoyed at the liberty which he took, though with the greatest respect and gentleness, to oppose himself to everything which appeared to him reprehensible in his conduct. One or two circumstances, which may be briefly alluded to, contributed to this estrangement. The Marquis de Rebé, brother of the archbishop, having come into possession of the barony of Arques, in the diocese of Alet, through a recent purchase from the house of Guise, the Marchioness, on her arrival at the new property, thought proper to impose a tax of two thousand livres upon the tenantry, to defray the expenses of the festivities to be celebrated on the occasion. This exaction, bearing heavily on the poor, and made without any legal right, immediately found an opposer in M. d'Alet, who was always solicitous for the temporal, as well as the spiritual, welfare of his flock. Accordingly, he wrote to M. de Narbonne to interfere. The archbishop was highly displeased with the respectful remonstrances of his brother bishop, who, he declared, "was always in his way." The matter, however, did not end here. At the Assembly of State, M. d'Alet advocated so eloquently the cause of the poor, that he entirely upset the propositions of the archbishop, who, caring little for the interests of the

province, had no other aim than to please the Court at the expense of the public. The effects of the archbishop's resentment was soon felt in the conduct of his officials, who either softened down or altogether cancelled nearly all the sentences which proceeded from the Ecclesiastical Court of Alet, against wicked priests, irregular marriages, &c., and we have already mentioned with what sorrow M. d'Alet saw these measures frustrated by those whose duty it should have been to aid him in seeing that they were duly observed. He did not cease to complain to the archbishop of the evil that was thus caused, but all his complaints were unavailing. This prelate neither understood nor attended to the government of his diocese or the administration of justice; he left all to his officials, and being prejudiced against the just severity of M. d'Alet, he sided with them on all occasions. With all this, however, he could not help having a great esteem for M. d'Alet, who, he knew, stood high in the estimation of the world, and, from time to time, would pay him visits at Alet, and, when staying at Limoux, would pray him to hold confirmations there and in the neighbouring villages, to escape his remonstrances, and to save himself from being reproached for his injustice and lack of zeal.

Another circumstance occurred which contributed still more to increase the prejudice and opposition of the archbishop. A book had just been published, under the title of "The Apology of the Casuists," which created a great sensation. The Bishop of Pamiers, in conjunction with the Bishops of Comminges, of Bazas, and Consérans, paid a visit to M. d'Alet, to consult together on the subject of the dangerous and pernicious doctrines which it advocated, and which they all agreed in condemning. It was represented to the archbishop, by designing persons, that M. d'Alet had held a provincial council against the authority of the metropolitan. It is probable that the archbishop,

who was not really unaimable, would never have taken offence at this circumstance, which the enemies of religion endeavoured to construe into an injury, had he not been so easily influenced by them, for he could not be ignorant that M. d'Alet was incapable of committing such an offence; but he was aware that our holy bishop was not in favour at Court, and he was too good a courtier to lose such an opportunity of humiliating him, quite forgetting that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes." He, therefore, issued a citation for the Bishop of Alet to render an account of his conduct in this matter of the assembly. The citation remaining without any reply, the archbishop pronounced judgment by default. He had no sooner placed his signature to the sentence than he fell sick, and expired after lingering fourteen or fifteen days. During his short illness, which seized him at Montpellier, stung by the reproaches of conscience, he begged the archdeacon of that church, whom he knew to be an intimate friend of M. d'Alet's, to write him a letter expressing his past sorrow that he had ever caused him pain, beseeching his prayers, and assuring him that he died his servant and friend. It was this circumstance which gave occasion to Cardinal Mazarin to say, when he was informed of the death of the archbishop, "It is a dangerous thing to trifle with M. d'Alet; he causes the death of all who dare to attack him."

CHAPTER XV.

M. Fouquet succeeds M. Rebé in the Archbishopric of Narbonne—his great friendship for M. d'Alet—places himself under M. d'Alet's direction—his exile—correspondence—the world's persecutions less dangerous than its caresses.



FOUQUET, who succeeded M. de Rebé in the archbishopric of Narbonne, was a man of very different disposition to his predecessor, and his conduct towards M. d'Alet was marked by the deepest respect. He consulted him upon all affairs of importance, and was guided by his advice. The first interview of these two prelates, however, gave little promise of that bond of union which afterwards united them so closely.

On the occasion of the king's marriage, the Court paid a visit to Toulouse, during which an Assembly of States was held in that city, the two prelates being present. The new archbishop, somewhat inflated by the high position and brilliant fortune of his brother, who had just received the appointment of Minister of Finance, assumed a high tone, and spoke to M. d'Alet with some degree of haughtiness. In doing so, however, he little understood the character of our worthy bishop, who never allowed himself to be daunted when pleading the rights of the episcopate or maintaining the discipline of the Church, and who replied to the archbishop with all the dignity and firmness which were so peculiarly his characteristic on such occasions. The archbishop was astonished, little expecting to find so resolute a spirit in one whom he knew to be the meekest and humblest of men; and, ashamed of the haughty and im-

perious air he had assumed towards him, he felt a deep desire to obtain his friendship and the benefit of his counsels. He begged his brother, who was present at Toulouse with the Court, to receive with kindness the visit of M. d'Alet. This the minister most readily complied with, and received M. d'Alet with such heartiness and goodwill, and testifying the deepest respect for his character, that M. d'Alet explained to him with confidence the subject of difference between himself and the archbishop, which referred to the adjustment of some matters which, as they existed, were prejudicial to his diocese. The minister, perceiving that his demands were very reasonable, counselled his brother to comply with them. He readily did so, and thus were all matters of difference settled between these two prelates to the satisfaction of M. d'Alet, who became from that time the intimate and cherished friend of his metropolitan.

The year following, the archbishop paid a visit to M. d'Alet, to consult him on the subject of the government of his diocese, and to concert measures for reforming the abuses which had been wholly neglected by his predecessor. This was followed by a continual correspondence on the same subject, and the advice which, from time to time, M. d'Alet gave to the archbishop was rigidly adhered to. But the archbishop was not permitted for a very long period to profit by the counsels of his friend so far as his diocese was concerned. The fall of his brother from his high position as Minister of Finance, in the September following, involved the whole of his family in his disgrace. The archbishop was banished to Veزالai, a small town in Burgundy. He proceeded thither at once with cheerfulness and resignation; it grieved him, however, that for two months he received no communication from M. d'Alet. At last a letter arrived. In his reply he gently reproaches his friend for his

long silence, and then assures him of his perfect acquiescence with the will of God in the events which had happened to him, regarding them as a mark of God's mercy towards him and all his family. His letter then describes the life of solitude he was then leading in his retreat, his pious exercises, and other occupations. He mentions the report which had come to his ears of the endeavours that were being made at Court to deprive him of the archbishopric, and of a priory which he had purposed to convert into a seminary for clergy in Narbonne. "I have neither been cast down nor afflicted by these events," he writes, "and during the fortnight after I had received the intimation of them, it seemed to me that I had rather wished for them than entertained any fear of reverses, and felt rejoiced that it had pleased God to place me in this happy necessity; that not having courage to give up all for Christ this necessity obliges me to do so, and furnishes me with the means of doing penance for the rest of my days in a life of privacy and indigence. It seems to me that I should have no repugnance to this course if you advise me to follow it, and that I should be delighted to render back to God all that He has given me, and of which I have made so bad a use; and seeing that, under the great pressure of business which the government of a large diocese and the duties of the archiepiscopate involve, my life is in a manner dissipated, and no time is left for acts of piety, it will be a relief and pleasure to retire for the rest of my days to some religious house out of Paris, where I shall be able to devote myself to prayer and meditation. I fear lest, however, the present humiliating position of my family, and the crosses and troubles of my charge, which weigh upon me heavily, may be the chief cause of these feelings. I beseech you to give me your counsel upon this." This letter was written on the 29th November, 1661. The reply of M. d'Alet was dated the 14th of January fol-

lowing. We give it in full, as affording the reader a clear insight into the mind and character of this wise and faithful counsellor of souls. It ran as follows :—

“ My Lord,—Be assured that nothing can diminish my affection for serving you, and if I have appeared somewhat tardy in writing to you after hearing of your family misfortunes, the simple reason has been that I knew not where to address my letters. Let me assure you that, for the space of ten or twelve days after the receipt of your letter, I have laid this matter before God, daily beseeching Him to instruct me in the answer that, according to His will, I should make to you ; and now let me tell you what has come into my mind on the subject upon which you did me the honour to ask my counsel. First, then, it seems to me, that, in order to avoid acting with precipitancy, and in the fervour of your new desires, but rather with wisdom and mature deliberation, it would be well for you to consider what is the real motive that has given rise to the desire to quit the administration of your charge and to live in retreat. And, in order to discover whether these thoughts come from God, I would counsel you to consider carefully and with sincerity, before Him, the motives which induced you to leave the charge of a bishop for that of an archbishop,*—whether you had simply in view the greater glory of God and of His Church, or whether you were swayed by some motive of self-interest. Secondly, if the ways and means by which this change was effected were right and canonical, that is to say, in accordance with the purity of the rules of the Church. And, thirdly, if you find in yourself, my lord, those essential qualities which Scripture and the Church require for the

* It was commonly reported that M. Fouquet had yielded up some benefices to obtain the coadjutorship of Narbonne, and this, joined to some other circumstances contrary to good order and rule, gave rise to a suspicion of some irregularity connected with his appointment.

worthy fulfilling of this ministry, which does not so much consist in the éclat of those *exterior* good works which may be accomplished in it, as in a foundation of deep *interior* piety, and, especially, of a profound humility, an abundant charity, and a solid and constant wisdom and moderation in every action. For you are, doubtless, my lord, well aware that all this exterior display of good works, and the éclat of our ministerial functions which attract the respect and admiration of the people, become not only useless but positively dangerous, having a tendency to produce in us a vain complacency and false estimate of ourselves.

“It is from such considerations, my lord, that you may usefully resolve what course to pursue, in order to know the will of God regarding you, and to follow it both for the present and for the future. In the meantime, I shall continue very humbly to beseech the Divine mercy to strengthen and assist you, to the end that, in a matter of such deep importance, you may act only in obedience to the movement and direction of His Holy Spirit.”

The exile of this prelate was for some time the cause of many troubles to M. d'Alet. The heads of departments, under the archbishop's predecessor, had not been removed by M. Fouquet. They were hostile to M. d'Alet, and, although the friendly feeling that existed between the metropolitan and his suffragan had caused them to be more circumspect, and operated as a restraint, they took advantage of his absence, by furthering the cause of the discontented clergy and laity of the diocese of Alet, who had appealed against the ordonnances of their bishop. They wrote letter after letter to the absent archbishop, representing the conduct of M. d'Alet as tyrannical and contrary to all judicial rules, and that he was profiting by the absence of the archbishop, and abusing his friendship by carrying his enterprises

to an extent he never would have dared to attempt in the time of his predecessor.

These accusations the archbishop sent to M. d'Alet by M. Ferret, curé of St. Nicholas-du-Chardonnet, a man naturally timid, and, consequently, less disposed to those firm and courageous measures with which a bishop must meet every opposition to good order to maintain Church discipline in its vigour, than to that temporising policy which would relax somewhat for the sake of compromise, but which, in spiritual matters, has never resulted in a solid peace. He endeavoured, therefore, to put an end to these complaints by making an accommodation and by yielding a portion of his rights to preserve the remainder. M. Ferret soon discovered that it was a vain undertaking to endeavour to weaken a bishop who possessed all the courage of those whom the Church honours as Fathers when acting for the glory of God, the welfare of the Church, or for the rights of the episcopacy. M. d'Alet would relax nothing. Ultimately, the archbishop, who would not allow his authority to be an obstacle to the good which his friend was effecting in his diocese, went at once to the root of the evil, and dismissed from office those who were so deeply prejudiced against our holy bishop, and who had been so long accustomed to oppose him. Nor did he stop here; for being desirous to do all in his power to facilitate the endeavours of M. d'Alet to preserve discipline in his diocese, he determined to place the selection of new officials in his hands, and appoint those only whom he recommended. This good service to his friend was the more disinterested as he was not ignorant that his confidence in him and his attachment was not the best means of re-establishing himself in the favour of the Court, which, he well knew, was not favourably disposed towards the Bishop of Alet. This conduct of the exiled archbishop affords an illustration of the truth of the maxim,

that "the world's persecutions are less dangerous than its caresses." The archbishop's predecessor, M. de Rebé, in his prosperity, pursued M. d'Alet with a legal process, simply to please the Court and preserve his credit in that quarter. M. de Fouquet, on the other hand, in his disgrace, attached himself more closely to M. d'Alet, and gave him all the assistance in his power to promote the good work in his diocese, regardless of the complaints of those who had power and influence at Court, and whose assistance might have been secured by a little management in a situation where it was natural for the archbishop to have sought the favour and protection of the sovereign.

The appointment of M. du Ferrier to the office of grand vicar to the metropolitan, at the recommendation of M. d'Alet put a stop to all further appeals against the authority and sentences of the latter, and was productive of the happiest results; those who had been accustomed to appeal against the decisions of M. d'Alet, and to oppose the discipline he had established were brought to submit to them with respect.

The union which subsisted between these two prelates continued to the end. The last proof of the friendship of the archbishop for M. d'Alet appears in a letter which he addressed to him a short time before his death, in which he expresses the gratitude he owes to M. d'Alet for having obtained for him so excellent a man as M. du Ferrier for his grand vicar.

CHAPTER XVI.

The heavy labours of M. d'Alet impair his health—laws of nature—illness—journey to Camarez and Vie to drink the medicinal waters—crowds follow him—preaches—distributes tracts, rosaries, &c.—mission to Beziers—war with Spain—discontinues to attend the sittings of Parliament—refuses his vote to the Prince of Condé—Louis XIV. at Toulouse—M. d'Alet presented to the King—continued friendship of the Queen—Cardinal Mazarin—preaches at Montpellier—conversions—Madame de Sartres—establishes a Sisterhood and Penitentiary—conversion of M. de Sartres, and the work he performed in Montpellier.



HE laborious application and incessant activity of M. d'Alet in his various undertakings exceeded his strength, and from time to time brought on attacks of illness which sometimes threatened his life, and generally left behind a languor from which he was a long time in recovering.

An enemy to luxury, plain and self-denying in his mode of living, and taking little care of his health, though naturally of a delicate constitution, he paid no attention to those premonitory symptoms of illness which usually give timely warning of its approach. Nature's laws, however, in regard to health, can no more be broken with impunity than any other of the Providential arrangements of the Great Author of Nature, and it would be well if good men would sometimes consider how much greater might possibly be their usefulness if, in seeking the perfection of their spiritual nature, they did not wholly disregard those rules by which their bodily health and vigour might be preserved in its greatest efficiency. M. d'Alet was subject to severe attacks of diarrhœa, which usually lasted for seven or eight days, and laid him completely prostrate.

During the course of one of his journeys through the diocese, he was seized with one of these dangerous attacks at Fréville, a small village on the Spanish frontier. The physician who attended him was more edified by the patience with which he bore the most acute sufferings than alarmed by the imminent danger which threatened the life of his patient.

While lying in this state, he was visited by a Spanish nobleman, lord of the territory, a religious man, who took care that nothing was wanting that could add to the comfort of the good bishop. It was some time before M. d'Alet got over the effects of this severe attack ; it left him with a dry cough and a kind of languid melancholy, which for a long time quite unfitted him for active duty, and rendered him incapable of application to work.

The physicians were quite at a loss ; they could not understand his case, or how to treat it, and at first ordered their patient to drink the waters of Camarez, a place at a distance of three days' journey from Alet, and afterwards those of Vie in Auvergne. In obedience to their directions, he set out for Camarez in the month of June, and stopped, at the end of the first day's journey, at the large town of Cannes, about three miles from Carcassonne. The inhabitants came in crowds to give him a hearty reception ; they accompanied him to the parish church, and from thence to the Benedictine Abbey, which was close by, in order to obtain his benediction. The joy which so many people testified in seeing him affected him deeply, and he responded to it by discoursing to them in his customary manner upon the practice of Christian piety, and upon the Commandments of God, and concluded with the episcopal benediction, which they begged him upon their knees to bestow. The report having been spread that the bishop would celebrate the Holy Communion, at a very early hour on the

following morning, in the Abbey chapel, the whole town turned out at two o'clock in the morning, and lined the road from the inn where the bishop lodged to the church, so that they might not lose an opportunity of receiving the benediction of the holy bishop—for so he was termed—in every place he passed through. By three o'clock he arrived at the church, and after the Communion Office was concluded, he delivered a discourse to the people upon the mysteries of the Faith, and upon the life of Faith, and urged upon them the practice of continual prayer. He exhorted the curé and his vicar to assemble the people on the Sundays and Festivals for morning and evening prayer; he urged them to observe regularly the practice of catechising, and of instruction by means of sermons on all these days; and briefly suggested to them the method of doing this. The people, delighted with all they had heard, and deeply affected, as well as edified, by the piety of the good bishop, re-conducted him to the inn, and waited in crowds for the moment of his departure. When this took place, they accompanied him a long distance on his way, recommending themselves to his prayers and loading him with blessings.

M. d'Alet arrived the next evening at Salvétat, a small town in the diocese of Saint Pons, where he pursued the same plan as he had done at Cannes on the previous day, and with similar success. He was here the means of the conversion of a young lady of rank, who, coming to hear him out of curiosity, was so much affected, that she sent to ask him to be kind enough to give her some instruction; this he did, and with so much success, that she resolved from that moment to take up the Cross and follow Christ. He drew up for her assistance some rules suitable to her station, and wrote to the bishop of the diocese to watch over this new convert, and establish this young lady in the good resolutions in which he had left her.

On his arrival at Camarez, he was met by M. d'Arpajon; who conducted him to his castle of Fayette, that he and his family might enjoy the advantage of the visit of so holy a prelate to their neighbourhood. The daughter of M. d'Arpajon had made a vow, when very young, to take the veil, and this intention had always been opposed by her father, who designed to marry her advantageously. The Bishop of Vabres, having been consulted upon the subject, had thought less of the real welfare of the young lady than of thwarting the wishes of his wealthy and influential neighbour, and had told her that her extreme youth, when she had made her vow, was a legitimate reason for obtaining a dispensation from it.

M. d'Alet, after carefully examining the whole matter, was strongly opposed to the decision of M. de Vabres, and spoke so convincingly on the subject to the father of the young lady, that he consented, at last, on setting out on an embassy to Poland, to leave her to follow the dictates of her own conscience, and be guided by the advice of our holy bishop. The waters of Camarez producing no improvement in the health of M. d'Alet, M. de Vabres prevailed upon him to pay him a visit at Vabres. He complied, and, while there, followed his usual custom, wherever he went, of seeking to win souls for Christ, and this he did by familiar intercourse, by sermons, and by catechising. Wherever he journeyed he distributed quantities of printed tracts, containing a short abstract of Christian doctrine, also a short office of morning and evening prayer for family use.

In all his journeys, he took care to provide himself with a good supply of these tracts, which he distributed wherever he went, believing them to be of much greater utility than medals, images, and rosaries, which are incapable of conveying instruction; but even these he did not discard, he knew how the simple valued them, and what helps they were to many

in kindling their devotion, and assisting them in keeping in mind the memory of holy things, and this, too, quite apart from any feeling of superstitious reverence for material objects. He, therefore, took with him a supply of them to distribute in his journeys. He valued every means that could assist piety, recommended the daily recital of the chaplet,—that touching chain of prayer in which the passion of our Lord is so vividly portrayed, an exercise which he daily observed himself, and which he prescribed to his penitents as a part of the rule he gave them for their daily practice, among others, to the Prince and Princess of Conti, during their retreats at Alet. This visit to Severac was greatly blessed to many of the surrounding clergy, who came, every day, to hear his addresses upon the responsibilities and functions of the Christian ministry.

Passing through the town of Albi, on his return to Alet, he found it in a state of commotion, in consequence of a disagreement between the inhabitants and their Bishop. Both parties begged M. d'Alet to be an arbiter in their difference. He readily complied, and on quitting the town had the satisfaction of leaving it in peace.

By virtue of his office of bishop, M. d'Alet had a seat in the Parliament of Languedoc, which assembled every year. The tax upon his time, which the duty of attending parliament involved, weighed very heavily upon his heart. Is it not sad, said he, that in the present state of the Church, its bishops are obliged to devote so much time to temporal affairs, which is so urgently needed by them for labouring in their diocese for the sanctification of their flocks? Why cannot we, as the apostles did, abandon the care of these matters to the deacons, so that we may wholly give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word? for these are the essential duties of the episcopate. M. d'Alet contrived, however, that the time required by these parliamentary

duties should not be wholly lost, and in whatever town in the province the Assembly of the States was held, there he laboured for the good of souls while the duties of parliament did not otherwise engage him. Thus, at Beziers, he undertook a mission at the desire of the bishop, after the most pressing matters in the States assembly had been concluded. He associated with him a number of ecclesiastics to aid him in this enterprise, whom he first carefully instructed by his discourses and the written directions he gave them, for they were little accustomed to work of this nature; his zeal supplied the rest, and, by the blessing of God on their labours, an abundant harvest of souls was gathered in.

The spiritual state of Beziers little accorded with its external aspect. To outward appearance, it is one of the most beautifully situated towns in the province of Languedoc, but its inhabitants were in a state of spiritual darkness and deformity. The blessing of God upon the labours of M. d'Alet, and his band of workers, restored its people to that life and immortality which are brought to light by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The news of this happy revival, which soon circulated around, gave rise to the mission to Limoux, of which an account has already been given.

After the death of Cardinal Richlieu, which took place about the close of 1642, and that of Louis XIII. in the month of May of the year following, the continuance of the war with Spain was a source of great trouble to M. d'Alet. The frequent passage of troops through his diocese inflicted great suffering upon the inhabitants, and the poor peasantry of Alet suffered nearly as much from the unbridled license of the French soldiery as they would have done had their territory been ravaged by the enemy's troops. Loudly and eloquently did the good bishop plead the cause of his oppressed flock in the Parliament of Languedoc; he com-

plained bitterly of the license of the troops, and the injury they caused in his diocese. With equal force he inveighed against the mode of raising the great sums which the parliament voted to the Government of France, and which were a source of grievous oppression to his poor. His efforts on these occasions to obtain some alleviation of the evils he so eloquently complained of availed nothing. The local authorities were bribed by the Court, and he beheld with pain the continuance of disorders for which there seemed no human remedy. His flock were even more rigorously treated, and our good bishop, grieved at the result of his efforts, abstained for many years from attending these assemblies, which had hitherto made heavy demands upon his time, and which he regarded as lost. Instead, therefore, of attending in person at the meeting of parliament, he wrote a letter each year, expressing his grievances so touchingly that the impression made upon the assembly when his letters were read alarmed those interested in the state of things complained of, and they endeavoured to interrupt the reading of them, and to prevent them being made public. These touching addresses were successful, and M. d'Alet rejoiced to see that they had the effect of procuring a mitigation of the evils which afflicted his people; and he thanked God that his resolution to remain at home in his diocese instead of attending parliament had procured for him a double advantage, of obtaining with greater ease that temporal relief for the sufferings of his flock which he had before sought in vain, and of avoiding the long interruption of his ministerial functions infinitely more precious to the spiritual welfare and real good of his diocese.

After absenting himself from these assemblies for several years, the repeated solicitations of all the well-disposed deputies for his reappearance so far prevailed with him that he thought it his duty to comply with their wishes, and he

accordingly presented himself at the assembly which was held at the town of Pezenas in the year 1655. It was on this occasion that the Prince of Conti, who occupied the post of president in virtue of his office of governor of the province, made that acquaintance with our good bishop which ripened into a close friendship, and became of such incalculable benefit to him during the remainder of his life. The sermons which M. d'Alet preached during this visit to Pezenas made a deep impression upon the prince, and, by the blessing of God, were made instrumental in producing a change of heart, and the commencement of a life of penitence, an account of which will form the subject of the succeeding chapter.

M. d'Alet had preached in Pezenas fifteen years previously on a similar occasion, and the effect of his discourses was still fresh in the minds of the people. It was on this previous occasion that he refused his vote to the Prince of Condé, president of the assembly, who solicited it in favour of one of his protégés. This prince called upon M. d'Alet to obtain it, nothing doubting that so apparently trifling a request would be instantly granted. He was mistaken. "When I left Paris," said M. d'Alet, "I made a resolution never to give my voice in favour of any person, whatever the occasion might be, whom I should not consider worthy; and this seems to be the intention of parliament in adopting the custom of attending the celebration of the Holy Communion before commencing its deliberations, to obtain from God light and wisdom to choose and to judge rightly, and I beg of your royal highness to leave me at liberty to follow the guiding of my conscience." The prince, astonished at the frankness of the bishop, and still more at the firmness with which he resisted his repeated endeavours to obtain his consent, rose hastily, and regained his carriage so quickly that the bishop had not time to follow him.

This refusal, which the ill-concealed annoyance of the prince soon rendered public, did M. d'Alet good service ; it saved him for the future the embarrassment of importunate solicitations of a similar nature, for no one expected to succeed with a bishop who had refused a prince of the blood.

On the assembling of parliament at Toulouse in the year 1660, M. d'Alet was presented to Louis XIV., who was present on that occasion. He said to the king, who received him very graciously, that, although he was one of the oldest bishops in his kingdom, he was perhaps the least known, but hoped his majesty would not consider him, on that account, less loyal to his sovereign. The king replied with kindness that, as to his being least known, he liked him all the better for it, as he looked upon that as an evidence of the care and application with which he devoted himself to the government of his diocese. The queen's mother, who retained all her former esteem for him, testified her great pleasure in seeing him again, and gave him fresh proofs of her good will, by endeavouring to remove from the king's mind the prejudice which the enemies of the bishop had endeavoured to create, in representing the strenuous opposition the bishop had shown to the subsidies voted from the province for Government aid, but which he had done simply for the relief of the oppressed poor. The visit of M. d'Alet to Cardinal Mazarin, the Prime Minister, on this occasion of the king's visit to Toulouse, exhibits an instance of the characteristic firmness and simplicity of our good bishop. The Cardinal received him with every testimony of respect for his rare virtue and talents, which he told him had obtained for him the esteem of all, but that it somewhat surprised him that a man of such piety should not have more sympathy for the interests of the king and for the necessities of the State, as he must know how great those necessities were. M. d'Alet replied, with his usual frankness, that he was not the less

wishful on his part that his eminence should know as well as he did how great was the misery of the people upon whom this heavy tax was imposed ; that the bishops were the true fathers of the poor, and it was their duty to save them from oppression ; that the intention of the king could never be to ruin his subjects, and it was really to act for the interests of his majesty to oppose the exaction of impossibilities.

The Cardinal, far from being displeased with this remonstrance, dismissed him with every mark of his esteem.

The labours of M. d'Alet, in his master's service, which he still pursued during the session of the Assembly of States, were followed by more striking results at Montpellier than in any other place, by the numerous conversions which followed them. Numbers of persons, affected as much by the self-denying life and devotedness of the preacher, as by the effect of his discourses, which he delivered with great power, came to consult him, confessed to him their inner life and needs, and sought his counsel for their guidance. One instance of the fruit of M. d'Alet's labours at Montpellier, which led to important results, is too interesting to be passed over in silence. M. de Sartres, a gentleman of high moral character, held an important municipal office in Montpellier. He had but one child, a daughter, the wife of the chief magistrate of Arles. His wife, Madame de Sartres, was a person in whom great goodness of heart was combined with talents of a high order. She possessed a sound judgment, a solidity of mind, and correct discernment, far above the average of her sex. Deeply moved by the stirring sermons of our good bishop, Madame de Sartres called upon him, and besought him to become her director. M. d'Alet, who had some knowledge of her real merit, was much pleased with the valuable qualities of mind which he discovered in her, and endeavoured, with great care and attention, to qualify her to act as a directress, in his absence, to

other ladies who had also consulted him. He consequently formed them all into a sisterhood, of which he constituted Madame Sartres the superior. They applied themselves to various works of active usefulness, as M. d'Alet indicated to them, the principal of which was the recovery and reformation of poor sinful women,—a numerous class in Montpellier. The sisters commenced by purchasing a house which they constituted a "Refuge for the Fallen." Assisted by the authority of the magistrates, they brought into this establishment all the women they could discover who were leading lives of sin; they also took in those who were more especially exposed to the danger of being led astray. Ample funds were supplied for the subsistence of the numerous family which was soon collected in their reformatory. The care of the sisters was also exercised in obtaining situations for those who gave good proof of a solid and durable amendment. The blessing of God was abundantly bestowed on the labours of these devoted women, and their continual vigilance, in discovering the objects of their charitable endeavours, soon purged their town and neighbourhood of these poor victims of debauchery. Touched with Divine grace, the active mind of Madame de Sartres soon found other works of mercy, inviting the labours of their sisterhood, and, which, under the conduct and direction of our good bishop, they diligently pursued. Her devout application to these labours of love was observed by her husband with feelings of great satisfaction, notwithstanding, up to the present time, he had been but a passive spectator of them. But the time had now arrived when he could no longer resist the convictions which his conversations with M. d'Alet, and the quiet influence of his wife's active piety, had forced upon his conscience. He resolved to give up all for Christ, and set out for Alet to consult our good bishop as to his future course of life. At Alet he made a long retreat, which he passed in exercises

of penitence, of prayer, and self-examination. Naturally of an ardent and enthusiastic mind, M. de Sartres could not stop half-way in anything he undertook, and his penitential discipline would have exceeded all reasonable limits of austerity, had not the watchful eye of M. d'Alet soon detected and forbade the least measure of excess. In the ardour of his zeal, M. de Sartres determined to dispose of his appointment, and retire into a life of privacy, that he might the better serve God without interruption. After some reflection, M. d'Alet opposed this course. He knew that a man of the active mind and ardent temperament of M. de Sartres must needs have some employment, and being possessed of great courage and perseverance in overcoming the difficulties of any enterprise he undertook, he considered it unwise that he should withdraw himself from a town in which he might accomplish much good, and where his high moral character had gained him considerable influence. Our good bishop, always careful to follow the apostolic precept of Saint Paul, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God" (1 Cor. 7, xxiv.), never counselled any one to quit the place where Providence had placed him, when he perceived him to be possessed of the necessary qualities for fulfilling the duties of his calling in a Christian manner. He therefore directed M. de Sartres to return to Montpellier, who, obedient to his advice, rejoined his wife, with whom he lived the remainder of his life in perfect continence, and in a loving union not often found in persons of such opposite temperament and disposition.

The duties attached to the office of counsellor to the Court of Aides were not sufficient for the zeal of so active a mind as that of M. de Sartres. He had been counselled by M. d'Alet to effect all the good he was able in the sphere in which Providence had placed him, and he soon set him-

self to work to carry out the advice of his director. He believed that this office, which gave him the superintendence of the police, gave him an opportunity of rendering good service to the public in repressing every kind of disorder and vice that was prevalent, and to which the fervour of his new piety made him more inimical than his former probity. He obtained the support of the principal magistrates of the city, who invested him with all the authority that was necessary to carry out his undertaking. Very soon the effects of his zeal became apparent. The first thing he did was to close the drinking shops on Sundays and festivals; gaming houses, and houses of evil character were closed altogether, and strictly prohibited; public meetings for dancing were put down, and exact regulations for the re-establishment of public order and decency were put in force; all offenders were severely dealt with, no matter who they were, or what might be their station in society, they were punished either by fine or imprisonment; the fines were paid into a fund which was applied to the relief of the poor. He spared no one. Some officers of the king's lieutenant, having been apprehended for misdemeanour, tried in vain to obtain some remission of their sentence: they were obliged to submit to their punishment. Equal rigour was shown to some counsellors who had been found in fault; all the consideration they could obtain from this inexorable guardian of the public, was, that he should content himself with the full amount of the fine he should choose to inflict, and forbear proceeding judicially against them to spare their reputation.

In consequence of the dishonesty of the persons who had been entrusted with the administration of the charities, and the management of the public institutions, the hospital of Montpellier had fallen into a state of disorganization and its revenues had been dissipated. Zealous for the public good, M. de Sartres undertook the investigation of its condition;

his clear head, and admirable business capabilities, in a short time put its affairs in order. The sums which charitable donors had left to it, and which had been directed into other channels were restored, and its debts were paid. He also discovered that a citizen of Montpellier, who had died about fifteen years previously, had made a will in which he had constituted the society of the Jesuits his sole legatees on condition that they paid to the funds of the hospital a yearly sum of two thousand four hundred livres. These good Fathers had omitted to carry out the wishes of the testator, and had never remitted to the poor the annual sum which the will directed them to do. M. de Sartres commenced proceedings against them, and though he met with considerable resistance, he gained his cause, and compelled these men to refund the whole of the money with interest. The costs of this law-suit M. de Sartres defrayed out of his own pocket ; he also added to the hospital some additional buildings, and liberally provided for many requirements which were needed to make this institution more useful in contributing to the succour of the sick poor ; and, lastly, he caused an efficient committee of management to be appointed, composed of men of known character and probity. He also presented to the Bishop of Montpellier, a valuable house, with a large enclosure, situated at the city gates, to be used for the purpose of a seminary. The prelate, however, applied this handsome gift to other purposes, and M. de Sartres, who had deeply at heart the desire of providing an establishment, as at Alet, for the training of young ecclesiastics, gave up a portion of his own house to some of the Fathers of the Oratory, on condition of their undertaking this duty.

From the time of his retreat at Alet, M. de Sartres never swerved from the new course he had entered upon, but was faithful to Him to whom he had devoted himself ; his life

was as penitent as it was laborious ; he never looked back, and, with his wife, persevered to the end of his days in applying himself to those works of piety to which M. d'Alet had directed him.

CHAPTER XVII.

Account of the Prince of Conti—birth and early life—his conversion—and subsequent religious life—conversion of the Princess de Conti—retreat in Alet—reparation—consecration of wealth—influence of example in persons of high rank.



WE have seen how M. d'Alet laboured among the multitude in preaching the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in proclaiming pardon to penitent sinners, and everlasting life through His Cross. It will be the object of the present chapter to relate an instance of his apostolic labours in connection with individual souls in the higher ranks of society.

For this purpose, it will be our endeavour to lay before the readers of these pages a somewhat lengthy, but deeply instructive, account of the conversion of a member of the royal family of France, for which purpose it pleased God to make use of the subject of our memoir.

Arnaud de Bourbon, Prince of Conti, and brother of the Prince de Condé,—known in history as the great Condé, one of the greatest military genius' of the reign of Louis XIV.,—was, from his infancy, destined by his parents for the Church, and, as provision for his maintenance, the revenues of five or six large abbeys were settled upon him. The young prince, however, evinced but little disposition for the ecclesiastical state, and, after the death of his father, which took place at an early period, he abandoned himself to a career of unbridled dissipation. The profession of arms, being much more attractive to him than that of the Church, he joined the army, and actively engaged in the intestine

struggles which distracted the early part of the reign of Louis XIV. known as the wars of the Fronde, and in which he committed great cruelties and excesses. After the termination of these civil wars, he married, in 1654, Anne Marie Martinozzi, a niece of Cardinal Mazarin. His marriage, however, had no effect in withdrawing him from a life of dissipation. In the following year, as the king's representative, he performed the duties of president at the Assembly of States of the province of Languedoc, which was held at the town of Pezenas. Shortly previous to his arrival, it had pleased God to awaken his conscience to a sense of his guilt. There was no escape from his fears, and while staying at Pezenas, the sins of his life arrayed themselves before him, and he was struck with all the terrors of a guilty conscience, which he sought in vain to calm. On the day that M. d'Alet called upon him, to pay the customary visit of respect, he was lying upon his bed. At the first sight of this holy man, the prince was struck with a feeling of consternation ; a sudden sense of the enormity of his sins overwhelmed him, and the presence of his visitor filled him with mingled feelings of respect and fear. "This is the man," he said to himself, "to whom I will unbosom myself ; it is he that shall lead me to make my peace with God."

The business of the day over, the prince could not rest until he had spoken to the bishop. Accordingly, he sent a message to him, asking him to visit him that night. M. d'Alet came, and sat with him for two hours, during which the prince opened his heart to him without reserve, confessed to him the miserable state in which he lay, and his great anxiety to seek for pardon and reconciliation with God. M. d'Alet spoke only a few words at this first interview, and after rising from prayer, assured the prince that he might rely upon his services, and that he should not fail to pray for him, that it might please God to confirm him in his reso-

lution to forsake sin and turn to Him Who willeth not the death of a sinner, and that He would be graciously pleased to increase in his soul the grace of a sincere repentance.

The period of Advent, during which this conversation took place, gave opportunity to M. d'Alet to ascend the pulpit more frequently than he was accustomed to do on other occasions, and thus enabled him to gratify the strong desire of the prince to hear him preach. The two first sermons which M. d'Alet delivered, made a deep impression on the prince. The one treated of the first principles of the Gospel, and the other of the Covenant of Holy Baptism and its solemn engagements. In the first, he compared the desire of the awakened soul for reconciliation with God to the germ of a new life implanted in it. He spoke eloquently of the dangers which threatened its extinction, and the constant care required to preserve and nourish this principle of a new existence, that, as a carefully tended plant, it might grow in strength and vigour, and finally bear fruit to perfection. He also compared this first turning to God in the soul of a sinner with the condition of an unborn babe, and the sinner himself, with the mother, who has another life within her, a precious treasure which she must preserve and nourish, and carefully avoid all dangers that might injure or destroy the little helpless infant before the period arrived for its birth. This sermon had a great effect upon the mind of the prince, but the second discourse, in which M. d'Alet spoke with great eloquence on the obligations of the baptismal covenant, made so deep an impression upon him, that he carefully wrote it out at length, adding thereto his own reflections. He did this that the weighty truths he had listened to, and which had burst as a flood of light upon his soul, might not be lost, and that, by frequent perusal, the feelings which they had produced might be nourished and increased. The effect of these discourses upon the prince

was very great ; he was deeply in earnest ; the value of the soul and its eternal destiny, filled his mind ; there was no trifling with his convictions, no resisting the spirit of grace ; he laid open his heart to M. d'Alet in perfect confidence and without the least reserve, and the holy prelate observed with admiration and thankfulness the rapid growth of grace in the soul of his penitent. Each visit to the prince added a fresh increase to his fervour, and advanced the great work of his conversion.

Our good bishop well knew that a general repentance is far from being a mere sentiment ; its sincerity will evidence itself in the life, by bringing forth visible proofs of a great and vital change, the reality of which will be rendered evident by works of virtue and self-denial, and especially by making all amends in our power for past injuries inflicted on our neighbour. M. d'Alet now wished to see in his penitent something more than words and sentiments ; it was time that the "fruits meet for repentance," should begin to show themselves. He had not yet spoken to the prince of the various acts of reparation it would be necessary for him to make to prove the reality of his sorrow for the impieties, the debaucheries and crimes of his past life. The time, however, had now arrived when it became necessary to speak on this subject, and, finding the prince one day in a state of deep humiliation, and in the same happy calm of mind that Saint Augustine experienced on a similar occasion after he had been weeping bitterly, he thus addressed him :—"It appears to me, my lord, that your repentance is sincere, and I have great hope that it will be permanent. It is now time that worthy fruits should be borne from it, to accomplish which, it will be necessary to adopt a ruled of living to regulate the present, and perform some penitential acts to make some amends for the past.

Accordingly, for the guidance of the prince, M. d'Alet

prescribed a rule, consisting of some pious exercises, for his daily practice. He also advised him to consider carefully the nature of all his obligations, and the various duties they severally involved. First, with reference to his family, then his domestics, his estates and property, his office under the Crown, his debts and expenses. In all this the prince followed implicitly the counsel of M. d'Alet, and submitted to all his directions with the docility of a child. These directions, among other things, comprised the duties of frequent prayer, of fasting, and almsgiving ; also a complete separation from all dangerous companions. While attending the services of the Church the prince was to adopt the attitude of penitence, and remain in a kneeling position until the conclusion of the service. This was an acknowledgment for the irreverence and impieties of his previous life, committed in the House of God, in company with young noblemen of his own age, and who would now be witnesses of this evidence of his contrition. All these injunctions the prince faithfully observed, but he afterwards declared that this act of humiliation cost him more than all the rest put together, so grievously did his pride rebel against it, and that he had suffered a species of martyrdom in conquering himself on these occasions.

The prince, having completed his parliamentary duties in Languedoc, was now obliged to return to Paris, and M. d'Alet, who knew how much need there was that a competent and enlightened spiritual adviser should be near to counsel the prince, and lead on this work of conversion to a happy conclusion, advised him on his departure to apply to M. de Ciron, Chancellor of the University of Toulouse, then in Paris attending the general assembly of the clergy.

After his return to Paris the prince had several interviews with M. de Ciron. The depth of his repentance, and his earnestness and sincerity in seeking and following instruction made a profound impression upon his new confessor,

who, in conjunction with M. d'Alet, was much affected by the complete change which the Holy Spirit had wrought in the heart of this notorious sinner. He recognised the finger of God in the greatness of his repentance, the fervour of his new-born piety, and his persevering courage in pursuing the narrow path of obedience with firm and undeviating step. This wise guide of souls, satisfied with the sincerity of the prince, and observing in him so many evidences of a heart renewed by grace, judged it expedient no longer to delay his admission to the full privileges of the Church, and consequently cut short the period more or less protracted which an enlightened spiritual guide will always prescribe in the reconciliation of great sinners in order to assure himself of the reality of their conversion. The prince had already completed a probationary period of nine months of the rigorous penitential exercises prescribed by M. d'Alet since his return to Paris, and which he continued through his subsequent life, and to which must be added those which he performed in Languedoc after his first interview with our holy bishop, at the time that it pleased God first to touch his heart. Consequently, after several preparatory interviews with M. de Ciron, the prince received from him absolution, and was admitted to the participation of the holy mysteries.

The principles of a new and risen life which, by the mercy of God, had thus been implanted in the heart of the prince, were now to be exposed to new trials. The Providence of God called him to a life of activity. He received from the king the appointment of lord high steward of the royal household, and not long afterwards he was placed in command of the army which was preparing to march into Italy. After setting out upon this expedition he took the route to Bordeaux to make reparation for sins which he had committed in that city during the civil wars, and which lay heavily upon his conscience. He had been guilty of the

abduction of the wife of a magistrate and counsellor of parliament who resided in that city. He called upon him, threw himself at his feet, and implored his forgiveness, and assigned a pension for life to the partner of his guilt for her maintenance in an asylum of penitence. From Bordeaux he proceeded to Toulouse, to seek to be relieved by the superintendent of finances from some duty which had been assigned to him by the Government, and from which his now sensitive conscience shrank. Having accomplished this, he left for Pezenas, where he had again the consolation of meeting our good bishop, and rendered to him an account of his life and experience since he last parted from him. He now sought his advice under the new and trying duties which devolved upon him as general of the army of Italy. To this M. d'Alet responded by drawing up rules for his guidance, and to these directions the prince resolved to conform. It was during this interview with M. d'Alet that the prince determined to put into execution the course which the bishop had advised respecting the revenues he had been receiving from church benefices from a period previous to his marriage. These unholy gains the bishop convinced him it was his duty to resign when his heart was first turned to God, and the prince had then resolved to give them up, but circumstances had arisen to delay the execution of this design, which he now carried into effect, relinquishing the whole of his income derivable from Church property. The proceeding drew from Cardinal Mazarin the remark, that he no longer doubted the conversion of the prince, his son-in-law, this proof having convinced him beyond all others that it was sincere.

The Princess de Conti, doubtful in her own mind what would be the result of this great change which had taken place in her husband, carefully avoided yielding herself to the frequent and indirect exhortations which were made to her to follow so good an example. In his subsequent in-

interviews with M. d'Alet the prince contrived that his wife should be present, in order that she might profit by the instructions of the good bishop which had equal reference to both. M. d'Alet, who perceived that the princess was but little disposed to religion, advised the prince for the present to forbear speaking to her on that subject, and to allow the silent influence of his own regular habits and religious life to have its effect upon her. He advised him to perform his devotions in her presence, to pray much for her, and leave the rest to God, Who in His own time would bestow the necessary grace which would dispose her to listen to him with pleasure when he spoke to her upon religious subjects ; but to discuss such subjects while there was no disposition of heart to listen to them would only cause aversion, which would defeat the object. Those who desire to be useful in leading sinners to Christ may derive here a useful lesson from the wise counsel of the good bishop. Many who are very zealous for the conversion of souls to God act frequently with but little wisdom, and their proceedings, well intended, but badly directed, produce no fruit, and often do more harm than good to the cause of religion. Those persons who would occupy themselves with work of this nature must be "wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves." They who possess this happy combination of holy wisdom and enlightened charity adapt their teaching to the strength and disposition of those who come within their influence, and reap blessed fruits from their labours of love and patience. In the natural sciences none can expect to attain great proficiency and achieve success but those who by patient study have acquired knowledge and skill. So in the highest of all the sciences,—that of the soul,—and which the Fathers have termed "The Art of Arts,"* a wise judg-

* *Ars artium cura animarum.*—S. Greg.

ment and deep discernment are qualifications necessary to perform this holy work with success.

We next find the prince at Montpellier, on his way to Italy. He had prevailed on M. d'Alet to accompany him to that town that he might derive all the benefit he could from his instructions until his departure. On his return from the Italian campaign, he was appointed Governor of Champagne and Brie. It was a source of grief to him that this appointment would remove him far away from the diocese of Alet, and he said to the good bishop, with a sigh, that he feared it would be long before he should see him again, and probably never. The bishop replied, in a cheerful tone, that he would return to him sooner than he expected. The event proved that he spoke from a correct presentiment, for, in the following year, the prince, having come to Toulouse upon the occasion of the king's marriage, his majesty conferred upon him the government of Languedoc which again brought him into the immediate neighbourhood of his dearly loved pastor.

When the prince succeeded to the high office of governor of one of the fairest provinces of France, and to the weighty responsibilities attached to it, he was not more than thirty years of age, and it was a source of deep satisfaction to M. d'Alet to observe that he had lost none of the fervour and earnestness which marked the commencement of his religious life, and that his piety increased day by day. Some proof of this is discernable in the following letter, which he wrote to M. d'Alet in reply to one which the good bishop had written to him on the subject of his new appointment. It was written on the 10th of April, 1660 :—

MY VERY HONOURED FATHER,

It is now three weeks since I received both your letters which arrived together, but the multitude of occupations that have engrossed me since I was made Governor of Languedoc, have prevented

me replying to them sooner. In your first letter you express the pleasure with which you heard of my promotion to this government, for which I return you a thousand thanks. But for myself is it not a cause for fear and trembling? and the worst is that I do not tremble. I beg of you, my very dear father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to assist me in my pressing need by your prayers and counsels, that I may be able to discharge my duties faithfully. I would beg of you, very humbly, when your leisure permits, to draw up for me an abstract of my duties and obligations as governor of the province, containing, first, general advice; secondly, what should be my home duties at my residence in this country, and when visiting the different places of my government; how I ought to comport myself with regard to the Court in the Assembly of the States; what course I ought to take to introduce beneficial reforms; also, as regards the taxes; the extension of the Church; and the extirpation of heretics. In short, give me, my dear father, your good advice touching all those duties belonging to my new office, for which I shall have to render account to God; and the method I should pursue to prevent my mind being dissipated by the multitude of external occupations. I feel assured that the interest you take in the province, as well as your love for my soul, will move you to do me this kindness.

I ask your blessing, and am, my very honoured father,

Your very obedient Son,

ARMAND DE BOURBON.

Very willingly did M. d'Alet write out for the prince the rules and directions required, and which afterwards served as the basis for the work he subsequently compiled, entitled, "The Duties of those in High Station." The prince received them with gratitude, and followed them with the most scrupulous exactitude, and nothing could surpass the care he took to establish good order throughout the extent of his government. His sincerity of purpose, and the regularity of his religious life, had silently, but surely, exercised an influence on the mind of the princess, his wife. A change gradually took place in her heart: she began to adopt the same religious exercises as her husband; entered, at length, on the pathway of the Cross; and walked by his side. The year following, she accompanied him to Alet, where they

made a retreat towards the close of Lent, 1661. During their stay at Alet, the princess was the guest of the Sisterhood of the Regents, no female being allowed to lodge at the episcopal residence, but she joined her husband there every day for the devotional exercises which they performed together, retiring afterwards to the house of the good sisters, where she passed a considerable portion of the day alone in meditation and prayer.

It was during this retreat that M. d'Alet took occasion to speak very earnestly to the prince on the subject of the sufferings of so many persons during the civil wars, of which he had been the chief cause, and that it became his duty, as a consistent follower of Jesus, to make all the reparation in his power to those upon whom he had brought so much misery ; also, to restore to the Church the property of which he had made so wrong a use during the time he had possessed it ; and to make restitution of the large ecclesiastical revenues he had received since his marriage.

After several preliminary conversations with the prince, who listened with great submission to all the bishop said on these subjects, M. d'Alet wrote out, at considerable length, the directions necessary to carry these designs into execution.

The difficulties which stood in the way of their accomplishment were in no small degree enhanced by the death of Cardinal Mazarin, which took place soon after. The prince succeeded to a large portion of the cardinal's wealth, which was generally thought to have been amassed by means that were far from creditable to the character of the deceased prelate.

The tree is known by its fruits. The readiness with which the prince acceded to the propositions of his director, and his willingness to make all the sacrifices which religion demanded, is a strong testimony to the reality of the great

change which Divine grace had wrought in his heart. He told the bishop that he was willing to give up all that he possessed, to resign his office of Governor of the Province, and to retire into private life, so that he might make all the satisfaction in his power for the injuries he had brought upon others. The princess, too, exhibited similar proofs of the workings of Divine grace. She expressed her desire to relinquish the vast legacies of her uncle, the cardinal, consisting of no less than the revenues of twenty-seven abbeys and a considerable number of smaller benefices, in the possession of which this prelate had impoverished the Church, and deprived the poor of that assistance in their needs, which, in the purer ages of the Church, was held to be theirs of right. But the more M. d'Alet rejoiced in the proofs of that Christian virtue which prompted these willing sacrifices, the more was he desirous to act with prudence and deliberation in so weighty a matter.

The importance of the steps he had advised their highnesses to take, was so great, that he urged them, before doing anything in the matter, to lay it before several holy and enlightened doctors of the Church, and to abide by their decision. It is needless to say that the course prescribed by M. d'Alet, to the Prince and Princess of Conti, was fully approved by the other holy men who were consulted in pursuance of the wish of M. d'Alet, and the Prince put into execution all that the good bishop had prescribed, and in the manner productive of the greatest advantage to the public. As the work was a considerable one, and could hardly be executed all at once, M. d'Alet very wisely separated it into portions. He recommended the prince, in the first place, to recompense those persons who had suffered from his actions during the civil wars,—these consisted of the poor of Berri and some other provinces,—and to use every precaution to ascertain what families had suffered

most. In the next place, he laid down in detail the manner in which the prince was to make restitution to the Church, for the revenues he had unjustly derived from her, not being an ecclesiastic, and performing the functions of that state; also, in not performing the duties of those who are charged with benefices, among which duties, a very important one was the daily recitation of the offices of the Church. The sums restored were to be expended in repairing and beautifying the churches in question, and in furnishing these churches and those who ministered in them with all the necessary ornaments and vestments required for the decent performance of Divine service. A certain sum was also set apart for the relief of the poor in the neighbourhood of the twenty-seven abbeys, and, in the same localities, further sums were also to be applied in the establishment of schools, and brotherhoods of charity for the instruction of youth and the relief of the sick poor. All these undertakings, together with many others of lesser importance, the details of which M. d'Alet wrote out with great minuteness, were put into execution by the Prince and Princess of Conti, and performed with scrupulous fidelity.

It has been mentioned that, at the death of Cardinal Mazarin, the Princess de Conti inherited a large portion of her uncle's wealth. She looked upon it as not her own, but committed to her stewardship, and desired to employ it all for God in works of charity. The advice which M. d'Alet had given her with regard to the manner of employing it, did not quite accord with her wishes. There were two objects on which she had set her heart: the first was the decoration of the Church of the Isle d'Adam, a territory which belonged to the prince, her husband; the second was to build a Carmelite convent, to which she might retire from time to time and live separate from the world. Our good bishop did not approve of either of these projects; he was

desirous that these ample means should be employed in works of greater usefulness. The matter, however, being a delicate one to deal with, he thought it best to advise the princess on this subject through her husband, to whom accordingly he wrote. Alluding to the wish of the princess to employ a large sum of money in decorating the church of the Isle d'Adam, he thought it would be much better, he said, to spend no more than would be requisite to make what repairs were absolutely necessary for the decent celebration of Divine service, and to go to no further expense. "The Church of Christ," he remarked, "has needs far more pressing than the decoration of its temples." It must not, however, be supposed from this remark, that M. d'Alet was by any means insensible to the propriety, nay, to the *duty*, of making the sanctuaries of the Lord beautiful and glorious. Such a work is good indeed when done in a loving spirit. The valuable family diamond which M. d'Alet deposited as an ornament upon the altar of his cathedral, is evidence of his full appreciation of this duty, but the withdrawal of that gift at the call of a higher need—to relieve the poor of a neighbouring diocese, in a season of great distress—bespoke a mind sensible of the supereminent principle of holy charity. Like the Mère Angélique, in the words of the author of the select memoirs, "he knew how to sacrifice the appendages of religious profession to the immutable principles of religion itself."

Touching next upon the design which the princess entertained of founding a Carmelite convent to retire into from the world, he remarked that her highness ought not to think of a devotion of this nature; her duty, he considered, was clearly, to follow in her husband's footsteps, and allow the influence of her piety to diffuse itself among the persons of her own sex. Far better for her, he considered, to seek to elevate the women of her province, by gathering them to-

gether, and having them instructed in the rules of a Christian life ; and this, too, would be a good means of gaining back to the Church those who had the misfortune to have forsaken her Communion ; and, lastly, that it would be a work worthy of her piety to seek the recovery of poor fallen women from a life of sin, and to establish places of refuge for their reformation.

The prince, charmed with this letter of the bishop's, which entered so minutely into the subject of all that was worthy of the life and character of a Christian princess, communicated it to his wife, who, he quite expected, would take as much delight as himself in the excellent projects which it suggested. He soon found, however, that the bishop had not, without good reason, anticipated some little opposition to his advice. The princess expressed her dissatisfaction that the bishop did not enter into her views, and seemed to pay no regard to her inclination which was certainly not worthy of blame.

This opposition of will, which M. d'Alet had foreseen, he had endeavoured, in the conclusion of his letter to the prince, to remove by a very gentle persuasiveness. " Perhaps," said he, " Madame may receive this advice unwillingly, finding it somewhat more difficult and contrary to her own wishes than she had expected, but I must faithfully declare, without any disguise, what I really believe most suitable to her vocation. Let me, then, beseech her to reflect that in determining upon any new undertaking in our Christian course, we must be careful to ascertain that we are not influenced by any personal considerations, or by the secret satisfaction that we may find in any particular course that presents itself to our mind, but, on the contrary, by the principle of holy charity, which ought to be the great motive of all our actions, and with which we ought faithfully and effectually to co-operate. I feel persuaded that she would do well to participate in

those works of charity and mercy which are suitable to her sex and her position, and which no person in the province is so well fitted as she is to accomplish. This seems to me to be the talent which God has placed in her hands, and it should be her duty and happiness to lay it out in His service. To retire into the solitude of the cloister, under the idea that such a proceeding would furnish the exterior means of attaining great perfection and separation from the world, would very probably end in disappointment. The more attractive the conventual life appears to her view, and the more she finds it accord with her natural inclination, the more should she be careful, to ascertain by prayer and waiting upon God, whether that natural inclination be in harmony with the leading of the Holy Spirit." The bishop concludes his letter to the prince by expressing a hope that Madame would have the kindness to excuse the apparent harshness of his counsel, remembering that, from a mind nourished among the mountains and rocks of a rugged and savage country, what other growth and produce could be expected than the wild and uncultivated fruits of nature, but indeed he had a confident hope, that, knowing her piety to be sincere, she would feel, as he did, how necessary it was, in a matter of such vital consequence, to dispense with compliments, and to speak faithfully and plainly what he conscientiously believed to be the truth.

This letter made a deep impression on the mind of the princess. She yielded at once to the guidance of the good bishop, whose counsel had, at first, been so distasteful to her; and to the rule of life he suggested as most suitable for her, she submitted with the docility of a child; and those works of active usefulness, which, in accordance therewith, she devoted herself, she pursued with fidelity to the end of her life.

The advice which M. d'Alet, in most cases, gave to per-

sons of high social rank who consulted him, was to remain in the calling in which God had placed them, that the world around them might be benefitted by their good example. Convinced that a life of complete external separation from the world can have but little effect on others, by way of example, he rarely advised individuals of elevated rank to adopt it. He considered that their high position, which naturally attracted the observation of the multitude, gave them a great influence for good or evil, which extended over a wider sphere than that of an ordinary individual. Placed in the scale of social rank, so far above others, their actions are narrowly scanned by those beneath them, who too readily imitate either the piety or the wickedness of their superiors, and experience has constantly proved the truth of the maxim, that "a kingdom conforms itself to the example of its sovereign."*

How necessary it is for those to whom the duty has been committed of instructing princes, to omit no opportunity of impressing this important truth upon their minds. It is only in proportion, as those possessed of sovereign power are attentive to this maxim, that they advance the glory of God, the honour of the Church, the public good, and the salvation of souls. A ruler, who to his sovereign authority has superadded the beautiful order of a Christian life, makes a greater impression upon the hearts of his people than the most eloquent preachers in his dominions. His blameless life, and the beauty of holiness that shines in his character, exercise an influence so powerful that the manners of the kingdom are reformed by it. Great indeed is the debt which individuals of exalted rank owe to those over whom they have been placed. They are accountable to them for a *good example*. This is the talent

* Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis.

which the Almighty has placed in their hands to be laid out to the best advantage for His glory, and for which they will have to render a strict account when they appear before His tribunal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Second retreat of the Prince and Princess de Conti to Alet, with numerous attendants—Count de Fénelon—undue zeal of the Prince and Princess restrained by the Bishop—fidelity to the common duties of life—opposes the wish of the Prince to relinquish the Governorship of Languedoc—heavy cross—struggles of the Prince to escape from his sufferings—his illness—returns to Languedoc—second illness—M. d'Alet visits him—death of the Prince of Conti.



THE short interval of religious retirement passed by the Prince and Princess de Conti at Alet was attended with so many beneficial results, both to themselves and to their attendants, that they determined to repeat their visit the following year, and to bring with them the whole of their household. With this object in view, they set out for Alet during the Lent of 1662, with a retinue of about one hundred and fifty persons, and arrived at their journey's end at the commencement of Passion week. The prince, as before, lodged in the episcopal residence, which also afforded accommodation for nearly the whole of his attendants. The princess, and the ladies who accompanied her, took up their abode with the Sisterhood of the Regents. Of this company, upwards of one hundred persons sat down daily to meals at the episcopal board. The term of their visit extended to a period of three weeks. A rule, which was carefully observed by all, regulated each day's employment, the hours of assembly for public worship, or edification, and for solitary retirement for prayer and meditation; all conversation was prohibited, and the strictest silence was preserved during the whole period of the retreat.

The prince had arrived at Alet a few days sooner than he was expected. The bishop was not at home to receive him, being absent upon a mission to Quillan, a small town in his diocese; a messenger was therefore despatched to inform him of the arrival of his guests. The Count de Fénélon, who accompanied the prince on this occasion, had already made a retreat, under the direction of M. d'Alet, at the country residence of a neighbouring bishop. Upon the event of his wife's death, which occurred shortly after, he felt a strong desire to enter the ministry of the Church, and, in order to consult M. d'Alet on this, he preceded the prince by one day's journey, to have a little time for conversation. Not finding him at home, he proceeded on, without stopping, to Quillan, where he met with the object of his search. After listening to the count's proposal, M. d'Alet endeavoured at once to dissuade him from entertaining it any further, representing to him that his little family of five young children left to him demanded all his care, and that the law of God required him to fulfil this obligation,—“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Tim. v. 8.) That it was his duty as a Christian parent to watch over these children, and train them for heaven, providing for them according as their condition in life and the calling of God required. That before this obligation could be dispensed with, in order to enter upon any other sphere of duty, it was necessary to show him some extraordinary indications of the Divine will pointing to such a course, and he must candidly say that he did not perceive in him any such indications. He could not, therefore, advise him to abandon a great and solemn duty to follow a movement of zeal which seemed to him inconsistent with that duty. The count was silent; he returned to Alet and awaited the bishop's return, informing the prince, in the

meanwhile, of all that had passed between them. "He asks me," said he, "for miracles before he can dispense me of the duty of taking care of my family, and, as I have no miracles to show him, he advises me to remain as I am, and devote myself to the Christian education of my children."

After concluding the matters of chief importance connected with his mission to Quillan, and leaving the work to be completed by the ecclesiastics who accompanied him, M. d'Alet returned home and joined his illustrious guests, who were anxiously waiting his arrival.

During the continuance of this retreat, M. d'Alet gave, each day, two general addresses to the whole company assembled, instructing them in the rules and practice of holy living. The work of grace, in the hearts of the prince and princess, was greatly deepened by these addresses and the private instructions they also received from the bishop. Its evidence appeared in an increased spirit of sacrifice. A courier was despatched by the princess to Paris, to dispose of all her jewelry, in order to hasten the restitutions which had previously been agreed upon; nor was this all: with deepened longings for increased holiness, and feeling sensible how much even lawful gratifications are obstacles to the progress of the Christian, in the higher and more perfect way, they mutually resolved to place in the hands of their director a vow of absolute continence.

The bishop, who disapproved of vows, except after a long and sufficient probation, would not permit them to enter into such an engagement; he encouraged them, however, to practise this virtue to the extent to which it might please God to give them ability without entering into any solemn religious obligation. As they would do nothing without his advice and sanction, the firmness of the bishop was frequently brought into exercise to oppose projects on their part he could not wholly approve of. Eager to make the

restitutions previously alluded to, they resolved upon disposing of their property and estates, retaining only a very moderate sum for their annual expenditure. They used every argument to gain the bishop's consent to this proceeding. It was, however, to no purpose. He replied to all their reasons, and convinced them, that by practising economy they would be able to lay aside, out of their savings, sums that over a number of years would go much farther in satisfying all obligations, than to dispose of their estates in order to accomplish it at once. More particularly it required all his firmness to oppose the design of the prince to effect the sale of his appointment of the Governorship of Languedoc, for he saw plainly that there was a deeper object at work in the mind of the prince than the simple realization of the large sum that this sale would bring, and that was to relieve himself of the cares and embarrassment inseparable from the responsible position of governor of a large province, and to gratify his desire for a retired and tranquil life.

By such a course the hopes which our prelate entertained of great good, both temporal and spiritual, accruing to the province, through the influence of the prince, would be dissipated, and the public good was far too dear to the bishop to allow so favourable an occasion to procure its escape. The reasons which he gave to the prince for opposing his wishes in this matter were as follows :—"The power and influence," said he, "attached to the rank of a prince, confer upon him a great obligation, and this he owes to the public, to whom, also, he is accountable for his character, his time, and his occupations. All estates of men have their essential duties attached to them, and the individual who faithfully performs the duties, common to all Christians, may sometimes render himself very culpable before God by omitting those which belong specially to his rank or position in

society. What would be thought of a father or mother of a family who should abandon all care of their children when at an age to need all the attention and solicitude of their parents in order to give themselves, without distraction, to a life of religious seclusion. Would they not be responsible for the accidents which might befall their children through their negligence in watching over their conduct and in providing for their needs? A prince holds a similar relation to the public as a father does to his family. Who is there to carry to the foot of the throne the righteous cry of oppressed innocence, or to represent the needs of the Church and State, &c., if those who are nearest to it by birth and rank refuse to do so? Who is there to help a king to sustain the heavy burden of royalty, if the princes of the blood withhold their sympathy and assistance? Kings are but too often surrounded by a troop of deceitful flatterers whose object is to conceal the truth and lead them into measures oppressive to their subjects. The saints have always sighed for those who have been called under the Providence of God to sway the sceptre, and it is the indispensable duty of a Christian prince to do all that lies in his power to counteract evils of such magnitude. In prayer and retirement he should indeed delight, that so he may listen to the voice of God in stillness and be instructed in His service, but he must rise from his knees when the hour for exertion calls him; he must leave his peaceful seclusion in spite of its attractions when the public good requires his services. 'Woe be to the man,' says St. Bernard, 'who refuses to act when it lies in his power to be useful to his neighbour.'"

These judicious remonstrances of M. d'Alet were effectual; the prince and princess had such perfect confidence in his wisdom and piety that they at once submitted to his judgment. The prince consented to retain his post of Governor of Languedoc; he instructed his secretary to draw out a plan

for those reductions in the public expenditure which had been previously projected, also for the reservation of an annual sum to relieve the province of its load of debt.

In this office of governor, which the prince only retained from a spirit of obedience to the advice of his spiritual director, and in which he recognised the expression of the will of God concerning him, he found a cross which seemed to increase in weight daily, and under the pressure of which he inwardly groaned. He endeavoured, to the best of his ability, to follow the advice of M. d'Alet in discharging the duties of his office in a Christian manner, but, his easy and yielding disposition, his natural inclination to please every one, and the conscientious scruples that arose in the communications he from time to time received from the Government of France, led him occasionally into faults, which he felt keenly, and they had the effect of reviving in him the desire of abandoning all for a life of tranquility and seclusion, which appeared to him a far safer course for his eternal interests. He had not been at home very long, after this second retreat, before he wrote to the Archdeacon of Alet in the following terms :—" Besides my utter incapacity," he writes, " to fulfil these heavy duties, which I feel to consist, first, in a want of wisdom to perceive, of decision to resolve, and of force to execute, I feel myself weighed down under a load of responsibility which I have brought upon myself by undertaking this charge. It is for these reasons that I earnestly beg for relief. Added to this, the restitutions I have to make, appear to increase daily, while the necessity laid upon me to maintain an establishment, consistent with the position I hold, absorbs nearly all my income. I beg that M. d'Alet will lay my case before our Lord and Saviour to know His will concerning me. The consequences of my sins, which, indeed, I confess to be very great, bitterly oppress me in the obstacles which they have placed in the way of

my spiritual progress ; they are greater than I can express. I submit myself, however, to the very righteous dealing of God with me. I fear greatly lest I should be writing hypocritically, lest what I have said should have proceeded more from the head than the heart. I think, however, if you could but be witness for a short time of the way in which I perform my work, you would soon be convinced of my incapacity."

The care and anxiety of mind which weighed upon the prince afflicted him in an increased degree, shortly after writing the above letter, and strengthened the temptation to withdraw into retirement. Those sweet consolations of spirit he had experienced at the period of his return to God were taken away. Those sensible delights, with which it pleases God ordinarily to draw to Him the penitent sinner, took wing, and left behind sadness, depression, and dryness of heart.

The Prince of Conti, who did not know that these bitter experiences were in reality a form of trial very necessary for the strengthening of his soul in faith and patience, considered them as indications that he had fallen back from God, and attributed the cause to the difficult and distasteful nature of his occupations. In this great trouble of mind he wrote from time to time to M. d'Alet, urging him to consent to his wish to resign his office, and withdraw into retirement, that there he might be able to wait upon God without distraction. In a letter written to M. d'Alet, in the year 1664, he tells him that the doubts which he entertained, whether God had really called him to be governor of a great province, had increased so much that they had passed into the conviction that this occupation was not in accordance with the Divine will ; and this was impressed upon his mind, first, from his frequent failures to accomplish the designs which his office required him to undertake, in a manner acceptable to God, although he trusted in His merciful kind-

ness and forbearance towards him; yet he judged of the future by the past, and did not hope he should ever do better, being conscious of a great deficiency in courage, fortitude, and determination,—qualities so necessary for the right fulfilment of the duties of his office. Secondly, he found that when in cases of great difficulty he had asked for advice, he had never had the courage to act in accordance with it, nor did he hope he should do better in the future. That an additional reason for quitting this charge was the sense of his positive incapacity arising from the natural disposition of a mind irresolute, weak, and precipitate. He thus concludes his letter :—"I pray our Lord and Saviour that He may enlighten you concerning me, and that your reply may not cause me to say of you '*Circum ædificavit adversum me ut non egrediar aggravavit compedem meum*,'—He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out, he hath made my chain heavy (Lam. iii. 7); for, alas! I greatly apprehend an answer that will weigh me down."

M. d'Allet, who well understood the character and disposition of the prince, was not of opinion that the change he so ardently wished for would be at all beneficial to him. He perceived in him a depth of sincerity and a rectitude of purpose very far removed from the hypocrisy with which he accused himself. The fact was, that the prince, in his daily life, conducted himself with exemplary piety; and the ordinary duties of his office he performed with true Christian fidelity. It is true he felt great repugnance in dealing with matters of more considerable importance, such as the open advocacy of oppressed innocence, and the protection of those persons who had been wronged by others high in rank and position. He failed, also, in firmness when occasion required him to communicate with the king and ministers of state. These were the weaknesses our good bishop desired so earnestly to remove. He trusted that the all-sufficient grace

of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, and which had enabled the prince to conquer his most violent passions, would not leave the victory incomplete, but would, one by one, remove every obstacle to a perfect conformity to the will of God. Carefully observant of the method of God's dealing with souls in their restoration and purification, M. d'Alet esteemed these very trials and struggles, which the prince met with in the execution of the weightiest duties of his office, as the most precious portion of his penitential discipline. This enlightened guide of souls was persuaded that even the very failures of the Christian soldier, called to active service in the world, are often more serviceable to the soul's progress, from the humiliations that attend them, than even the pious exercises of those who pass their lives in retirement.

For this reason, instead of yielding to the wishes of the prince, he replied to his arguments; showed him how little weight they really possessed, and encouraged him to persevere. In the letter addressed to the prince on this occasion, he told him that he regarded the anxiety of mind and perplexity that so troubled him, not as the effect of grace or the promptings of the Holy Spirit, but attributed them rather to the workings of self-love and the delusions of the enemy of souls. That the effect of grace in the souls of those led by the Holy Spirit was never to trouble or perplex, much less to discourage; that he was not surprised to hear that his highness, during the fervency of his devotions in Holy Week, had been so agitated on the subject of his vocation, since our Lord during *that* week of His earthly life had been so deeply tried as to draw from Him the exclamation, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (St. Luke xxii. 53); nor did it even surprise him to hear that his doubts had changed into conviction, since the mind is always more agitated by false light than by sound reason.

With regard to the faults which the prince acknowledged in the discharge of his administrative duties, M. d'Alet did not gloss them over. In a spirit of faithfulness, he justly condemned them, but he reproved him much more severely for his lack of courage in not conquering in himself the dislike he showed for his vocation. "You ought to humble yourself before God," said he, "for these faults, instead of making them a subject of complaining. The sure effect of grace, which produces in us a salutary humiliation for our failings, is to give us a filial confidence that the goodness of God will correct them in us, however small our hope of this may be from past experience ; that these are the occasions when it is necessary to hope against hope, and to brace up our souls to a holy courage in our struggles against those obstacles which appear, humanly speaking, insurmountable ; that we must not allow even repeated failures to discourage us ; on the contrary, their effect should be to urge us to renewed effort, and to yield ourselves wholly to the power of Divine grace, which will at length achieve the victory both *in* us and *by* us ; that a true soldier of the Cross should never allow himself to be daunted, but that while he becomes more and more familiar with the habit of self-distrust, and the humble avowal of his *own* insufficiency, he should likewise daily increase in strength through a firm and undoubted reliance on the assistance of God. If you do not condemn yourself for the faults you feel conscious of, and, instead of making persevering efforts to overcome them, deliberately yield to their supremacy over you, what loss may they not occasion you ! But if they are preceded by fervent resolutions, and followed by deep humiliation of soul, they may be overruled by these holy practices for your advancement. It may please God to make use of these very faults of negligence, of timidity, and 'the fear of man which bringeth a snare,' as means to show you what faults you have to

conquer. In a contemplative life devoid of active duties, you would be ignorant of them ; to struggle against them would be impossible, as the occasion would be wanting ; you would be sick without knowing it, and there would be no possibility of cure. According to the rule of Holy Scripture, it is no legitimate excuse before God to say we have no vocation for our employment, and that we must abandon it because we do not feel ourselves possessed of sufficient courage and constancy to fulfil its responsibilities, and to preserve us from yielding to the temptations it brings in our way. It is our duty to consider our vocation as a talent to be laid out in the service of God. Let us never forget the warning in the Gospel concerning the slothful servant, who, finding so much difficulty in improving his talent, and the rigorous account which would be required of him how he had used it, considered himself sufficiently discharged from his debt by returning the talent as he had received it. Whoever seriously reflects upon the Master's reply, and the reproach and punishment which followed, will not be very eager to quit his employment, unless after much careful deliberation, to ascertain whether the idea of relinquishing it for some other course of life is truly from God, or the effect of our own impatience." The bishop concluded by reminding the prince, that when he counselled him to accept this charge he told him then, as he had frequently repeated since, that he must not consider this employment as a post of ease and comfort, but rather as a cross upon which he would be extended, and by which he might practise a continual penitence and mortification of heart ; and also to consider that, in being called to this charge, God was saying to him, as to St. Paul,—“ I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake” (Acts ix. 16).

The prince at length yielded to these counsels ; he ceased to murmur under his burden of duty ; he struggled bravely

with the repugnance he felt to deal with matters of difficulty ; to resist the tyranny of the Government ; and to defend oppressed innocence. He braved the opposition of the powerful in Church and State, in order to help his oppressed friend, the bishop, when subjected to legal processes by several of the ecclesiastics and gentry of his diocese in the troubles connected with the formulary of Pope Alexander VII., and which subjected the good bishop to the severest persecutions.

It pleased God to exercise the patience of this penitent prince by various trials. During a visit to Paris in the year 1644, he suffered a long and painful illness, which was aggravated by the thought of the evils that he foresaw would take place in his province in consequence of his absence. During the course of this painful illness, he sent for the Curé of St. Sulpice to administer to him the Holy Sacrament. This curé had a strong prejudice against M. d'Alet, and refused to comply with the request of the prince, except upon the condition that he withdrew himself from the spiritual direction of this holy prelate. The prince was deeply hurt at this unwarrantable proposition, and after having convinced the curé of the injustice of his suspicions and prejudices, said to him, with deep emotion,—as he did to all who spoke to him of the alleged Jansenism of the good bishop,—that he never felt a greater attachment to him than he did at that moment, for he had never so well understood his real merit ; that if he were a bishop himself, he should consider it his duty to follow the same course as M. d'Alet under the present troubles in the Church ; that he would rather die without the Sacraments than withdraw from the communion and direction of a saint who was an example to the whole Church, to whom he owed so much, and of whose virtue, wisdom, and catholicity he was so well convinced.

The prince immediately despatched a messenger to inform the Archbishop of Paris of the conduct of the curé, who ordered him to administer the Holy Sacraments without delay, and forbidding him to refuse them again upon such improper grounds. In the letter which the prince wrote to M. d'Alet informing him of this circumstance, he says, "I am ready to share with you all your persecutions, whatever they may be, and from whatever quarter they may come. By God's mercy they do not alarm me, and I hope with His grace to have no fear for the future."

Having passed the winter in Paris, for the establishment of his health, the prince returned to Languedoc in the spring of the following year, 1665, and made a third retreat at Alet soon after his arrival, in order to consult with the bishop as to the means he should adopt to remedy the evils that had ensued in the province during his absence in Paris ; also, to what extent he ought to resist the orders he had received from the Court, previous to his departure, to levy upon his province a tax which seemed to him exorbitant, and which was to be put into execution at the next Assembly of States. The prince had already made the strongest remonstrances to the Court, but without success. The king had refused to listen to them, and required implicit obedience. The financial minister at that time was M. Colbert, who appeared more anxious to obtain supplies for the Government, than to ascertain whether the provinces were really able to support the heavy burdens he imposed upon them. From this minister the prince did not receive the same consideration that he had done from his father-in-law, Cardinal Mazarin. In the district of Provence, the excessive exactions of the Government had provoked the resistance of the people, and troops had been sent there to enforce the payment of the taxes. This proceeding alarmed the prince, who feared lest his own province should be

treated in the same manner, if any resistance was made to the exorbitant demands of the Government. He felt it to be utterly impossible to raise the required sum, and he was keenly sensible of the painful duty which, as governor and the king's representative, devolved upon him. In this state of anxiety, he wrote to M. d'Alet, giving him a full account of the trying circumstances in which he was placed, and endeavouring to convince him of the necessity under which he lay of resigning his office forthwith, to escape the responsibility of the unjust and oppressive measures which, as the instrument of the Crown, he should incur by putting them in force, or else of the cruel treatment he should bring upon the province if he refused to do so.

Our good bishop, who was never more courageous than when he had no other resource than the help of God, replied to all the prince had written without in the least altering the counsels he had given him in the more favourable circumstances of his government. He endeavoured, in the first place, to raise his courage, and strengthen him in the great principles in which he had been so well instructed. He reminded him of the fidelity he owed to the king, and, as prince of the blood, he was more especially bound to support the true interests of his sovereign, by representing to him how much opposed to them were the orders he had received. "Sincerely to fulfil this difficult duty of fidelity to the true interests of the sovereign, a prince," said M. d'Alet, "is no less obliged to resist those measures which have been conceived in error, and are manifestly unjust, than to obey, and put into execution, those which have been well judged and are for the good of the State." He reminded the prince also of the duty he owed to the people he governed. "You ought to be a father to them," said the bishop, "and not be afraid of exposing yourself to trouble to help them in difficulty, and to use your best efforts to save them from injustice and op-

pression, let the consequences be what they may. In the counsels of God, it may be, that you have been born to the high rank you possess, and called to govern a province to perform this important duty ; as Mordecai said to Queen Esther, on an occasion somewhat similar,—‘and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this’ (Esther iv. 14). Even should you be dismissed from office, that need not disquiet you ; the eyes of the world would ere long be opened to the reasons for your being so dismissed, and you would have the satisfaction of suffering for the cause of justice. As regards the rigorous punishment you fear may be drawn upon the province, I doubt much if this evil will be greater than the excessive imposts which, if enforced, must bring total ruin to the people ; after all you will not be responsible for their misery before God. These reasons might, perhaps, justify you in declining the government of the province, if it were offered to you upon such conditions as these, but they do not authorise you to resign it. To expose ourselves to great evils, out of the order of Divine Providence, is to act with rashness and to tempt God, but to fly from them when they meet us in our calling, and come to us in the same Divine order, would be weakness and infidelity. Let us walk right on in the straight path in which God calls us ; let us do all He bids us do, come what may ; and, with humble confidence in His love and mercy, leave in His hands the consequences of our obedience.”

It pleased God to accept the sincere intentions of the prince to follow the advice of his director, and to spare him the trials he so much dreaded. He had long been subject to severe attacks of illness, which sometimes reduced him to a state of great weakness. He never quite recovered from the illness which detained him so long in Paris in the year 1664. He had undergone a surgical operation, from the

effects of which he suffered frequent returns of pain, until he became dangerously ill towards the end of the year 1665. Upon hearing of his illness, M. d'Alet wrote him a long letter on the 11th of January following, instructing him how he might best profit by his affliction, and reminding him of the spirit of sacrifice in which a sick Christian should lay under the hand of God. "You appear to me," said he, "to be among the number of those who accompanied the three kings in their search for the infant Saviour, to pay their sovereign homage at His feet, and to offer with them not only gold and incense, but also myrrh,—the emblem of our sufferings. I feel assured that you do not fail in the Christian duty of making these painful trials serve for your soul's welfare, and which is a sign of your progress in true piety. May yours be that sweet peace which attends the exercise of patience,—a great virtue, and one that never appears more beautiful and Christlike than when seen under the most painful sufferings."

The prince, who felt himself becoming weaker every day, greatly wished to see his spiritual director, but would not, on any account, have him sent for because of the severity of the season. The princess, however, took upon herself to acquaint the bishop with the critical state of her husband and of his wish to see him. He set off at once, and arrived on the 11th of February. He found the prince in a very weak state, though the physicians did not consider him to be in any immediate danger. No doubt under the great physical depression which accompanied his illness, the difficulties and responsibilities of his government would weigh upon his mind with tenfold pressure, and this led him again to intreat M. d'Alet to consent to his resignation. The steady refusal of the bishop, who was always opposed to this course, for the moment irritated the prince, and caused him to give way to some expressions of impatience for which

he was afterwards sorry, and before the bishop's departure humbly besought his pardon. Being assured by the physician that there was no ground to apprehend danger, the bishop returned on the 17th of the same month. From that time, the prince gradually sank, and on the 21st of February, 1666, expired in the arms of M. de Ciron, who, on hearing of his illness, had come to see him. Thus it happened that he who, in the order of Divine Providence, had been the minister of reconciliation for this penitent soul and had received him into the communion of the Church, stood by his side again during the last moments of his short and painful but victorious course, received his latest sigh, and closed his eyes in peace.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Princess of Conti corresponds with M. d'Alet—education of the two young Princes—restitutions—counsel of M. d'Alet on this subject—the Princess regulates her household on the strictest principles of economy—her example has great influence in Paris—she retires into privacy—engages in works of active usefulness—frequent illnesses—death—letter of M. d'Alet to the two young Princes—the Duchess de Longueville.



It is not the design of this work to give a history of the Prince and Princess of Conti, except so far as a brief mention of some of the leading incidents of their religious experience may serve to throw light upon the character of the good bishop, whose life and labours form the subject of this work.

It was the cherished wish of the prince, and he took care to have it expressed in his will, that the princess, after his decease, should consult M. d'Alet on all matters of importance concerning the welfare of herself and their children. The princess faithfully complied with this wish of her deceased husband, and she did so with the more pleasure as it accorded so well with her own sentiments of respect and affection for the prelate to whom they both owed so much. It will be the object of the present chapter to relate briefly the principal subjects of doubt and difficulty in which the princess sought the advice of M. d'Alet, subsequent to the death of her husband, and the wise and faithful counsel she received from him on every occasion, and which exhibit so many instances of his uncompromising fidelity to the dictates of a heart filled with the spirit of God, and of a mind guided by the highest principles of Christian truth.

Upon the death of the prince, the Princess of Conti with-

drew for a time to the Carmelite monastery of Narbonne, from whence she wrote to M. d'Alet, beseeching his prayers on behalf of herself and her two young children. He wrote to her as follows :—" I should have set out the day after I received your letter, to condole with you under the great loss you have sustained in the death of the prince, your husband, but I judged it would be better for you if I left you in the rest and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you will now take more than ever for your true comforter. One thing I would beg of you,—be careful of your bodily health ; it is more than ever necessary for you to do so now for the sake of your children and for their Christian education. To do this, as in the sight of God, will be offering an acceptable sacrifice to him ; and I would also advise, at the present time, some moderation in your religious exercises. God requires of us a service that is reasonable, and that does not exceed the rule of moderation, and this is all the more necessary for you to observe at this juncture, for you will need all the bodily strength you possess to sustain the pressure of business which will probably now come upon you. I beg of you to repose your fullest confidence in my sincere and unalterable affection for you and yours."

Previous to her departure to Paris, the Princess de Conti had begun a correspondence with M. d'Alet upon the subject of the restitutions which have been already alluded to. These payments had been commenced by the prince and continued until his death, and it now devolved upon the princess to complete this work. The education of the two young princes, her children, was another subject upon which she sought the counsel and assistance of M. d'Alet. She begged him to provide her with a person whose piety and attainments would fit him to undertake the training of her two children and take charge of their education ; and she was the more anxious about this as several abbés and gen-

tllemen at Court, in whom she had no confidence, were solicitous of this office. The bishop very willingly complied with her wish, and sent M. de la Pejan, under whose care the two princes were placed. This gentleman had been trained under the eye of M. d'Alet; he was a person of a solid understanding, and to his eminent attainments in learning was joined an exemplary piety and a refinement of manner that well fitted him for the office he was chosen to occupy; and so faithfully did he fulfil the trust reposed in him, that the princess, in all her letters to the bishop, never failed to repeat her grateful thanks for the treasure she found in having such a governor for her children. As a proof of his fidelity, M. de la Pejan resigned his charge rather than take the young princes to the opera, which the Court required him to do, after the death of the princess, which took place in the year 1672.

No sooner had the Princess de Conti taken up her residence in Paris among her relations and members of the royal family, and had come within the influence of the Court, than attempts were made to dissuade her from continuing the payment of the restitutions which had been agreed upon and arranged between her late husband and the Bishop of Alet. A course so contrary to the spirit of the world was sure to evoke that opposition which all must encounter who endeavour to regulate their lives and actions by the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They represented to her that the course she was pursuing would in time reduce her and her family to poverty; that M. d'Alet could not have well considered the expenses which were necessary to maintain the two princes her children in a manner suitable to their rank and position; and that to deprive them of their property would be throwing a temptation in their way to seek, by unjust ways, to obtain the means of supporting their rank and birth. Far be it from them, they remarked, to urge any

deviation from what the law of God required, but they would at any rate recommend her to take counsel of those who were well instructed in the rules of Christian duty, and not to hold herself absolutely to the direction of a bishop of such well known severe and rigid notions as those M. d'Alet entertained and carried to excess. And with regard to the persons whom she might consult in this matter, they would leave her free to choose whom she pleased among those doctors in the Church who were in greatest repute for their piety and attainments.

The princess was placed in a trying position. She had no longer a husband to help her in maintaining the principles they had mutually resolved upon, and she was at too great a distance from M. d'Alet to find in his wisdom and piety a prompt succour in the conflict with the world's opinions which prevailed around her. The remonstrances of her friends did not seem to her very unreasonable, and though she had the fullest confidence in M. d'Alet, she thought there would be no harm in taking the opinions of some of the most esteemed members of the clergy in Paris. Accordingly she did so, and they gave it as their united opinion that, after having restored seven hundred thousand livres of the property she had inherited from Cardinal Mazarin, she might consider she had done as much as the circumstances of the case required, and might very conscientiously retain the rest. This decision, so favourable to the view her friends took of the matter, was far from setting her mind at rest. She felt she could not act upon it without first submitting it to M. d'Alet. She enclosed it to him in a letter written on the 26th of January, 1669, and begged him to give her his opinion of the course which he believed before God was the right one to pursue. She told him that what troubled her most in the matter was that the expenses of administering the trust were so excessive, and absorbed

so large a portion of the funds that it left only a small sum to be divided.

M. d'Alet very carefully considered the decision of the doctors, which the princess had enclosed to him, and returned the following firm but modest reply.

"I cannot," said he, "but greatly respect the singular piety and profound learning of those persons whom your serene highness has consulted in this matter, and I should have wished, with all my heart, to have been able to join with them in their advice and sentiments; but since you desire to know what my own feeling is, permit me to say with all simplicity, that, after I had carefully considered the document you have been pleased to send me, I was unable fully to concur in the decision it expresses. Perhaps this may be owing to a want of light and penetration on my part to comprehend fully the principles upon which the judgment has been arrived at, and the reasons for their application to this particular case, and I think, too, that the various circumstances which are connected with the subject tend to make such application the more difficult and the less certain. It is not my intention, however, to disapprove absolutely of the decision of these eminent personages. I must be content to suspend my judgment, as I do not see my way to give it my entire approval. I must, nevertheless, say that to my mind there would be greater safety and repose of conscience in following those rules upon which you have been acting up to the present time; for I assure you I think them clearer, more straightforward, and more conformed to evangelical simplicity than those now suggested. They have, as you know, been carefully considered by the late Prince de Conti, who not only found nothing in them to disapprove of, but it appears by his will that he has always followed them, and that he never entertained the views which are now proposed to secure inheritance to his children. And if such

thoughts had passed through his mind, and we may well suppose they did, considering his acuteness and penetration, he has at any rate not thought well to carry them into effect. To this let me add another consideration, viz., that the supposed advantage which your serene highness would derive for your children by disburdening the estate of the restorations chargeable upon it, does not seem to be very considerable or very real. For supposing they should not come into possession of any other means of sustaining their rank and quality, they could still do as their father has done, and make it sufficient, as he did, by reducing their expenditure to the utmost ; and, if on the other hand they should succeed to other sources of income, which their birth and education give reason to hope, we ought then fairly to presume that they would perform what is ordered in their father's will, or at any rate you would have them instructed on this point and leave the rest in the hands of God. We should take care that, in the wish to save them from an evil that is remote and may never happen, we do not expose them to another which would be present and certain, as it would be, if an inheritance came into their hands which was found not to have been legitimately acquired.

“ Had there been any safe and certain way of relieving the estate of the late prince from this charge, I should be rejoiced, indeed, to see it adopted ; but the method proposed seems to me neither safe nor sure, and is accompanied with many difficulties. I believe it would be the safer course to allow matters to remain as they are and leave the result in the hands of Providence. This course would be much nobler and more edifying to the world than the one proposed, which would have just the contrary effect and most likely be misunderstood. It also seems more in harmony with the mind and intention of the late prince, who, having apparently foreseen all these inconveniences, did not consider

it necessary to prevent them. While he lived he proved his willingness to bear a load of humiliation for his faults, and he has thought that, after his death, his children might bear a portion also. It pleases God sometimes to conceal many things from us in order to draw us more and more to cast ourselves upon Him in the exercise of faith. This matter in question may, with regard to yourself, be of this nature ; and it may be that God is making use of it for the purpose of strengthening your faith and confidence in Him. Individuals of elevated rank have so few opportunities of this nature of abandoning themselves to God, that when such occasions do present themselves, they ought to esteem them as blessed means which God is putting in their way, and so turn them to good account for their advancement in the spiritual life. Thus having well considered this matter before God, I cannot see my way to alter the judgment which I have held from the time the case was first proposed to me ; and at this moment I see nothing safer for your highness and your children than to follow the footsteps of the late prince by persevering in the spirit of poverty, and reducing your expenses to the limits of necessary things, so that you may employ as much of your income as you are able in restitutions and almsgiving, which is the plan you first adopted for your rule in life, and which you have followed up to the present time.

“ I pray to God that He may so enlighten and strengthen you by His grace that you may know and perform in this matter whatever is most conformed to His holy will.”

The effect of this letter upon the mind of this truly Christian princess was all that could be wished. It quite set her at rest. The specious reasons of the doctors appeared to her in their true light ; they were clever and exhibited much power of mind ; but decisions on matters of conscience so framed are not always in conformity with the law of God,

which is the sovereign rule of the actions of men as it will be the judge of them. She saw that they favoured the inclinations of nature which caused her to suspect them, and she now found that they did not meet with the approbation of a bishop who, she well knew, was learned in that highest wisdom,—the science of the soul. His advice at once commended itself to her *heart*, and she decided to follow it as the surer and better way. Guided by the original plan for these restitutions, and which was thus confirmed by the letter of M. d'Alet, she drew up instructions for the mode in which the payments were to be continued, and gave them to those gentlemen who had been appointed to administer to her estate, with orders to see to their being properly carried out. She reduced the number of her servants and contracted her expenses within the smallest compass, and wrote to M. d'Alet to give her the rules upon which he conducted his household, in order that she might adopt them in her own. She devoted the remainder of her life to the edification of the Court and of her neighbourhood, and she did so with success.

Her piety, and the examples of virtue which were observed in her household, were the theme of general admiration. It is thus that a great and steadfast faith gained at last a victory over the world, though, for a moment, it seemed to falter under the weight of its opposition. How eloquent was the sermon which was preached to the world of Paris in her day by the life and example of this Christian princess! What good might not be effected in the Church in our own day by ladies of rank and position following so edifying an example?

The predilection the Princess de Conti had always felt for a life of retirement from the world, led her to hasten the completion of the affairs of business which required her presence in Paris and her appearance at Court. As soon as

everything was arranged, she left Paris and retired to her estate of Buchet, where she led a solitary life, occupied in prayer and works of charity. One of the first thoughts which entered her mind in this retreat was to consecrate herself to God by a vow of chastity, an idea which she had proposed to her husband at the commencement of their religious life. She was at this time in the prime of her age ; and to mental capabilities of no common order were joined those exterior charms of person which the world so much admires. She first mentioned her design to her confessor, the Abbé de la Vergne, in whose hands she proposed to place her vow ; he at once approved of it, and accepted the proposition. All that was needed to complete this matter was the sanction of M. d'Alet, whom, as it has been already mentioned, she always consulted upon all matters of importance. She wrote to him and said all she could to gain his consent. Our good bishop, however, thought otherwise. "It would be better," he said, in his answer to the princess, "to serve God with a full heart and a mind at liberty, than to expose yourself to the temptation of regretting the sacrifice you have *irrevocably* made, and which you may make with freedom daily. Besides, I do not see any necessity for it in your case. In your condition no one will press you into marriage, and, on your part, you have no inclination for that state of life, but, on the contrary, a strong feeling against it."

It was not all at once that the Princess de Conti became fully sensible of the sound wisdom of those principles upon which the Bishop of Alet had guided her from the time she turned her steps heavenward, so frequently did his direction run counter to her own judgment and feelings. But when she found by experience how wise, and good, and right were all his counsels, she poured out her heart to God in thankfulness for the blessing he had given her in such a guide,

and for the grace which had enabled her to follow his direction ; especially was she thankful that he had caused her to relinquish the very great desire she had entertained at the time of her conversion to build a Carmelite monastery at Pezenas, and to retire into it from the world. She felt assured that the course of life she had been led to adopt was more penitent, more edifying by its example, and more useful to her neighbour, and, consequently, more conformed to the order of God, than the life she would have led in seclusion from the world. There, it is true, she would have been free from those inquietudes and embarrassments which one has to encounter in the world ; she would have been surrounded by all those many helps and appliances which the most regular and devout who retire from the world rarely fail to procure for themselves ; but the Court and the great world without would have lost the benefit of a great example. They would not have seen a princess teaching the women of her day, by the pattern of a pure, holy, and self-denying life, how it is possible, in the full bloom of their youth and beauty, to live in the midst of a seductive world without following its maxims, or being defiled by its contact ; and how, too, while exterior beauty may attract general admiration, piety alone can win respect and esteem from those who are its declared enemies.

The Princess de Conti continued, to the close of her life, to follow faithfully the rule of living prescribed for her by her spiritual director. She was regular in her attendance at all the services of her parish church, and was at the head of all the good works which were undertaken in her neighbourhood. She visited the sick poor in their abodes of poverty and wretchedness, depriving herself of comforts that she might have wherewith to supply their wants. With a constitution extremely delicate, she was astonished to find how well she was able to endure the fatigues of these works of

charity, in which she declared that she found such comfort and delight, that in her estimation the most exalted position and employment the world had to offer could not be compared to them. With all this care for "the stranger," she took care not to neglect her own children, and, although she had provided them with so excellent a governor in M. de la Pejan, and a preceptor in the celebrated M. Lancelot, she did not withhold from them a mother's care and attention; she had them always near her, and they accompanied her whenever she left home.

The princess was subject to very delicate health, and she had frequent illnesses, to which the penitential discipline she practised not a little contributed. She suffered from a severe attack in the autumn of 1669.

"What gives me consolation under the sad news of your illness," writes the bishop, in a letter addressed to her on this occasion, "is the Christian resignation with which I know you suffer this affliction; and nothing can contribute more to your peace of heart and confidence in the mercy of God than this humble submission to His holy will under the pressure of those trials He is pleased to send you. The maladies which afflict us are a subject for our humiliation: these are necessary accompaniments of our mortality. It will be your duty and your comfort to abandon yourself into the hands of God in the frequent maladies He is pleased to subject you to, regarding them as so many favours from His hand,—trials by which He would purify you, and detach you more and more from the world and from yourself. I pray earnestly that He may impress these thoughts upon your heart, and be pleased, in His goodness, to be Himself your patience and your strength."

The princess lived three years after the date of this letter, and entered into rest on the 4th of February, 1672, after receiving the last Sacraments from the curé of her parish.

On this occasion, M. d'Alet wrote as follows to the two princes who were thus left orphans in their early youth, expressive of his sympathy for the loss they had sustained in so excellent a mother and one who had loved them so tenderly. "I have thought it my duty," he writes, "to testify to your highnesses how deeply I feel for you in the affliction which the loss of so dear and so good a mother has brought you. Her pious care for you in every way that could contribute to your welfare made her presence indeed a blessing ; but there is every reason to believe that God has only taken her to Himself in order to place her where she will be able to aid you still more effectually. The remembrance of her piety will be an excellent lesson for you, and a powerful motive to keep you in the good way you have been taught to walk in ; and her example, with that of the Prince de Conti, your father, will always be a sufficient guide to instruct you how to fulfil the duties which belong to your rank and to live as Christians. I pray God, with all my heart, to impress your mind with these thoughts, and that He may bestow upon you in abundance His richest blessings."

The two young princes were very grateful for this letter, and in acknowledging it they besought the good bishop to continue to pray for them, and to give them his advice as he had done to their parents, and expressed their determination to follow their Christian example in things both great and small.

The king took great compassion upon these two orphan princes, and sent for them to Court to be companions of the dauphin, who was about their own age. Their preceptors, Messieurs de la Pejan and C. Lancelot accompanied them, but they soon discovered that the strictness and regularity of their system of education which they pursued in the fulfilment of their duties towards their two young charges, while sufficiently respected, found no favour at the Court

of Louis XIV. They endeavoured faithfully to carry out the wishes of the late princess, their mother, and the principles of the Bishop of Alet in conducting the education of the princes, and firmly refused to bring them to the theatre. This opposition to the wishes of the Court led to their dismissal, much to the regret of their aunt, the celebrated Duchess de Longueville, who had deeply at heart their spiritual welfare, and who, on the death of their mother, had taken them under her own care by the advice of the Bishop of Alet. They caused her much anxiety, but she had a wise and faithful adviser in M. d'Alet, whom she consulted on various occasions, not only with regard to the management of her nephews, but also on the subject of her own spiritual welfare; and it may interest the reader to notice one letter which she received from the good bishop at an early period of her religious life, and at a time when she was in a state of great perplexity.

The Duchess de Longueville was sister to the Prince of Condé, surnamed "The Great," a prince of the blood royal of France, and one of the ablest commanders of that age of great military geniuses. The bright intellect, the wit, the beauty and charms of manner of this haughty princess, combined to form an influence which she used in the pursuit of a restless ambition, and which contributed to foment those sanguinary struggles known as "the wars of the Fronde," which caused the loss of so many lives, and desolated France during the early years of the reign of Louis XIV.

It pleased God, in His mercy, to touch the heart of this princess in the year 1659. The world, with all it had to offer of pleasure, of power, of influence, and fame, appeared to her in a new light,—that of eternity. She saw how hollow and deceptive were the objects she had so long pursued, and with such fatal consequences; she resolved to make some atonement for the past. Her first anxiety was

to find a holy priest, sufficiently wise and enlightened to direct her in spiritual things ; but she found a great difficulty in this. There were two parties in the Church at this time distinguished by the names of Molinists and Jansenists. To the former belonged the Jesuits, who carried with them the king and Court. From this party she shrank with repugnance, for their well known relaxed notions of morality made her feel that they were not the men who were likely to furnish her with the guidance she wanted ; on the other hand, she feared the displeasure of the Court if she placed herself under the direction of one of those who were decried by the term Jansenist, in whose piety and learning she had great confidence. These men were in great disfavour at Court, and were the objects of bitter persecution. In this dilemma she adopted a middle course, and made choice of an ecclesiastic who assured her he belonged to no party. He was a person of moderate intelligence, sincere in his profession, but ignorant and narrow-minded, and quite unsuited for the duties with which she entrusted him. He advised her, from time to time, to withdraw for periods of a fortnight together into the retreat of a monastery, and to occupy herself in meditating upon subjects which he wrote out for her at length. The length and tediousness of these exercises produced a feeling of weariness, which prevented any good accruing to either the mind or the heart. After submitting to this trial for a period of two years, and having lost confidence in her director, from whom she had received no real assistance, she took advantage of an opportunity which offered for an interview with M. Singlin, the confessor to Port Royal des Champs. From the first moment of their conversation she recognized the guide she so much needed,—one whose evident acquaintance with the things of God and knowledge of the human heart at once recommended him to her confidence, and she opened out her heart to him. The

result of a second interview determined her to choose him for her director. She consulted M. d'Alet on the subject, who approved of her choice, and at the same time replied at length to an important question which she submitted to him on the same occasion, viz. :—"Whether it would be doing wrong to forbear on some occasions following the guidance of a director possessing (it is believed) the necessary qualifications for discharging the duties of his office."


"We must distinguish," said our prelate, in replying to this question, "between two kinds of knowledge requisite for a guide of souls to possess to qualify him for this most important duty. The first has an external relation, and proceeds from a thorough acquaintance with holy doctrine and the rules of the Church, and their right application to the various difficulties of consciences. The second has to do with the inmost recesses of the human heart, and consists in the discernment which enables a director to understand the interior state of the soul, combined with the wisdom to apply prudent and suitable remedies for all its various needs. When a difficulty arises which requires for its remedy an appeal to the first kind of knowledge, it is quite allowable, without violating the obedience we owe to our director, to prefer the advice of persons who possess this knowledge in a more eminent degree; but when the difficulty is of the second kind, and has reference to the interior state of the soul, including the various dispositions of the mind, the feelings of the heart, and the inspirations and temptations which occur to them, in such a case, it would seem right that deference and submission should be paid to the counsels of the director, rather than to the bent of our own impulses, especially when we have fully acquainted him with the matter, and also to prefer his judgment to that of the most learned individuals; for we may fairly presume that, having a vocation for this direction, it would please God to bestow

upon him the necessary light and grace in a more abundant measure than upon those whom He has not so called to this special function."

The Duchess de Longueville continued to correspond with the Bishop of Alet until her death, which took place in the month of April, 1679.

CHAPTER XX.

The general esteem felt for M. d'Alet in France and other countries—**extracts** from the letters of various dignitaries of the Church on this subject—**Ma-**riolatry in France—plan proposed by M. d'Alet to check this growing evil—letter to M. Ragot, Promoteur of Alet, on his retirement—M. Hardy retires into the Monastery of La Trappe.

HE reputation of the Bishop of Alet spread far and wide. Accounts of his unwearied labours, his sanctity, and wisdom, were circulated throughout all France and even in foreign countries, and crowds of persons of all ranks and states of life were attracted to the episcopal town of Alet to see the man whose name was in every mouth, and to be eye-witnesses of the marvels which he was reported to have accomplished. Those who could not come wrote to him. It would weary the reader, and expand this work to unreasonable dimensions, to give anything like a full account of the communication by letter which the subject of our memoir received from time to time from all parts of France, and the replies which he made to them.

A few extracts from the letters of some of his principle correspondents may suffice to show in what estimation this excellent prelate was held by the leading dignitaries of the Church in his day.

“I have no greater joy,” writes Cardinal Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix, “than to receive your letter, and my esteem for your virtues will not permit me delaying to express to you my thanks for the work you have accomplished. My mind has long been engaged with the idea of the re-establishment and maintenance of Church discipline, and I pray

you to communicate to me the thoughts which it has pleased God to put into your mind on this subject, and I ask also your advice that I may engage also in this work with success."

"I shall shortly be in your neighbourhood," writes M. de Grignan, Archbishop of Arles, "and shall not fail to visit you, for I long to converse with you, and to profit by your example, and have the benefit of your wisdom and counsel."

M. de Harlai, Archbishop of Rouen, afterwards translated to the Metropolitan See of Paris, thus writes:—"The reputation of your good work has reached us here and roused us up to follow your example. I must tell you that the force of your example has stirred me to undertake great designs for the glory of our Lord and the good of His Church. Should I ever have the happiness of seeing you, I shall ask you to tell me what remedies you would advise for the unhappy state of irreligion that prevails at the present time throughout France. God has not so abandoned us but that He has raised up, from time to time, prelates whose lives and labours have been a preservative of the Truth amid abounding errors. Would that I had the wings of a dove that I might come and hear you speak upon a subject of such deep importance. I must wait until it shall please God to detach you from your dwelling and bring you to the capital, where we shall have the opportunity of listening to your instructions upon the purity of doctrine and priestly discipline."

M. de Perefex, Archbishop of Rhodes, and subsequently of Paris, always entertained a sincere respect for M. d'Alet, and on various occasions defended him at Court when his character was aspersed before the king by the false reports and calumnies which the enemies of religion never ceased to launch against him. "I have always," writes this prelate, "considered M. d'Alet as the perfection of benevolence, of

gentleness, and goodness, and, as to doctrine, never otherwise than truly orthodox." In another letter, alluding to the complaints made against him to the king by a party of the gentlemen of the diocese of Alet, he adds, "that the reply which his majesty made to them was that he could not believe that so good a man as the Bishop of Alet could possibly be guilty of the things imputed to him." He strongly, however, advised M. d'Alet to make a journey to Paris, a measure which he considered necessary for his interest and for the safety of his reputation. But our good bishop believed, on the contrary, that a *continuous* residence in his own diocese, and a constant application to the work of maintaining the discipline he had revived in it, and which might suffer in his absence, was the best means of preserving a reputation which he looked upon as less his own than the Church's property. He considered, therefore, that it would be quite sufficient to lay the simple facts of the case in writing before the king, in order to dissipate the dark clouds that calumny had collected, and to obtain justice. This was the course he adopted, and it was successful.

"I am astonished," wrote M. de Sanguin, Bishop of Senlis, "at the number of laborious works which you have undertaken in your diocese. They seem to me to be as much as five or six ordinary men would be able to accomplish. The submission and docility of your clergy are wonderful, but not less so, to my mind, than your own labours and instructions. I hope that your prayers may obtain for me the grace to share in the same spirit of zeal and activity."

M. Fenoillet, Bishop of Montpellier, wrote from Paris, "the marvels which God is working by the ministry, the assiduity, and the labours of the Bishop of Alet, are the subject of general conversation."

The celebrated M. Godeau, Bishop of Grasse, in a letter

written 31st of May, 1646, expressed the great desire he felt to make a journey to Alet to spend a considerable time there for spiritual renewal, to open his heart to our good bishop, and profit by his example; and that nothing gave him greater consolation than the accounts which reached him of the wisdom, the zeal, the gentleness, the evangelical simplicity of the Bishop of Alet, and the plenitude of the episcopal spirit which our Lord had bestowed upon him.

The numerous letters from bishops, written on the occasion of the serious illness of M. d'Alet, testify the high estimation in which he was held. In many dioceses, public prayers were offered for his recovery.

"Your wisdom," writes M. de Sévin, Bishop of Sarlat, "is a precious treasure in the Church; we must do all we can to preserve it."

M. de Lodevè despatched a courier to Alet expressly to enquire after the health of M. d'Alet. "I feel so deeply," he writes, "the loss the Church will sustain, should it please God to take you to Himself, that I cannot rest until I have some certain tidings of your state. Great, indeed; would the loss of so bright an example be to the negligent ones such as I am, for, indeed, I know of no other so capable of rousing us to exertion."

Between M. de Comminges and M. d'Alet an intimate friendship existed. The translation of the former prelate to the See of Tournai did not interrupt it, notwithstanding the strong disapproval which the Bishop of Alet entertained for these changes (prohibited by the ancient canons) except in those rare cases when the needs of the Church seem to require them. In the correspondence which took place between these two prelates, among the subjects upon which they interchanged their thoughts, was that of the Mariolatry of the day, and which arose from the following incident:—Some time after M. de Choiseuil, Bishop of Comminges, had

taken possession of his new diocese of Tournai, a work issued from the press entitled "Salutary counsels from the Holy Virgin to her indiscreet devotees." M. de Choiseuil read it, and it met with his approbation; it was received in a different spirit by the monastic bodies in the diocese and by several of the clergy; they were indignant, and between them and the bishop a difference arose on the subject. The bishop wrote an excellent pastoral letter, which he published, and in which he undertook the defence of the book, and, to give more weight to his support of this object, he proposed to the Bishop of Alet to lend his influence by publishing the pastoral letter in the diocese of Alet.

The Bishop of Alet, wise and prudent in all his proceedings, as he was zealous in the defence of solid piety against the abuses which disfigure it, did not think it judicious to publish his friend's pastoral in the diocese of Alet, but, at the same time, fully sensible of the importance of the subject, and to the increasing danger which threatened the Christian religion from the pervading idolatry, unknown in the purer ages of the Church, he suggested a plan which he considered better adapted to attain the desired end, and which he conveyed in the following letter to the learned doctor who had written to him on the subject :—

"I accept, very heartily, the proposition you make to me to take part in the defence of the pastoral letter of M. de Tournai, touching the little book entitled 'Salutary counsels from the Holy Virgin to her indiscreet devotees.' Your reasons appear to me to be very substantial and good, and confirm the opinion I have long held, that the bishops have a special duty to perform in this matter, and to do all they can both to remedy the evil that at present exists, and to prevent what it is to be feared it may grow to. All we have then to do, is to agree upon the best means to adopt, and how to put the same in practice. In the plan you propose,

I find some difficulty for reasons specially connected with the state of my diocese, for there would be some inconvenience, it seems to me, in publishing the letter of M. de Tournai, and to recommend it to the clergy and people of the diocese of Alet by an episcopal ordinance. The abuses which the letter treats of do not exist in this diocese, or, if they do, they are not known; it would, therefore, be to apply a remedy where there appeared to be no disease. Besides which, this letter being somewhat lengthy, and touching upon various points of doctrine in a learned and theological manner, is above the capacity of my people generally, and, indeed, of several of my clergy also. It is, too, an extraordinary letter, and on that account there is some reason to apprehend the danger of a commotion being excited by it about matters which are quite set at rest with us; it might, also, occasion scruples of conscience and give trouble to the weak-minded and less instructed among our people. For these reasons I should be glad if some other expedient could be devised free from these difficulties which have reference to my own diocese, and very probably to some others also. I will propose a plan which I have thought of and which seems less objectionable, and it is one that has already been adopted on similar occasions. It is that the little work in question be printed, together with the author's explanation, giving the reasons for its appearance, and with the pastoral letter of M. de Tournai, and that the book composed of these three pieces be prefaced with the approbation of a considerable number of prelates. My reasons for recommending these three pieces to be published under one cover is that they mutually explain each other; also the pastoral letter of M. de Tournai, being an official act, and having been published in his diocese, ought not to be dealt with in this manner if published separately; but if joined with the other two pieces, to which it refers, it

of piety ; and this is what I told you myself at Pezenas before your departure, and which led me to think seriously about you. I feel I cannot join in the opinion of M. de Tournai in this matter. Thirdly. You have not only laboured successfully for yourself here, but it has pleased God to make the talents he has given you instrumental in the work of reviving Church discipline in the diocese, and this you have happily accomplished in face of great obstacles placed in the way by all classes of people. But this reform, which is indeed great, is, nevertheless, only in its infancy ; and, so far is it from being established, that, unless maintained by incessant care and watching, it is to be feared we may fall back into the old state again, if not into something worse. And truth obliges me to say that you, of all others, are the most capable of contributing to the permanency of the work already accomplished. For these reasons it has pleased God to make use of you to revive this discipline ; we believe, therefore, He requires you to aid in maintaining it. Fourthly. You have gained the confidence of the people, and this gives you an authority and influence in the diocese which will render it easy for you to do what no one else could. So great is the scarcity of sincere and earnest labourers in the Lord's vineyard in the present day that the Church knows not where to find them. Fifthly. Your engagement binds you to this employment, and you should fear that God may call you to account, not only for the good you might have done, but also for the evil which may follow from your departure. Sixthly. There is still another reason to consider, and it is one of no little importance. It is to be feared that your retirement at this juncture may do much harm in the diocese. I judge from the effects of the departure of M. Hardy, which has disturbed many persons and exposed them to the strong temptation of believing that they could do more good elsewhere, so that if you leave

us it will again unsettle them and may renew their temptations. You may judge from this into what trouble and perplexity we shall be thrown."

With reference to the asthmatical attacks M. Ragot was subject to, M. d'Alet proposed to place him in the milder locality of St. Paul, and offered him a professorship in connection with that city. "It may be said," added our prelate, "that the work which yet remains to be done here is of small importance, and what there is to be done elsewhere is so considerable, that this consideration, taking also into account your malady, which you think unfits you for this rigorous climate, determines your choice. But, besides what I have already said, let me also add, that the good which may be done here is very certain, and what you propose is very uncertain, and, indeed, little probable. You may convince yourself of this if you will consider that to accomplish what we have done here has consumed the pains and labours of twenty-five years of residence and incessant toil. I beg of you, therefore, my dear friend, not to be prejudiced in favour of the change you contemplate; it is a matter of the last importance, not only as effecting your own well-being, but that of many other persons. It is a dangerous thing to quit the line of our vocation, and very solemn are the warnings in Holy Scripture against doing so, and this should be sufficient to cause us to reflect well before exposing ourselves to regrets and repentance. After all, my dear friend, you know that nothing is more foreign to my mind and conduct than to *dominate* over others; my conscience does not reproach me with having treated with harsh authority the souls it has pleased God to confide to me. Still less would I act authoritatively with you. 'I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.' (2 Cor. viii. 8.) I leave you entire liberty to act as you think best.

My only reason for delaying to respond to your request was that I might open my heart to you, and make you feel that I love you in the bowels of Jesus Christ as my brother and my son, assuring you that my regard for you will always be full of affection and tenderness."

The individual mentioned in the foregoing letter, whose departure from Alet had exercised so prejudicial an influence on many of the other workers in that diocese, was M. Hardy, a sincere and holy man, and a very valuable help to M. d'Alet. He belonged to Paris, and was nephew to the famous Voiture; his piety led him, in company with several other ecclesiastics, to Alet, with the design of placing themselves under the spiritual direction of the bishop. It transpired that M. Hardy and some other of his companions had taken a vow in early youth to embrace the monastic life. Our worthy bishop, who perceived in them the talents and qualifications for serving the Church actively and usefully as parish priests, considered it his duty to demand a dispensation from these vows from the Pope, that the Church might not be deprived of their services. Accordingly, he wrote to Pope Alexander VII. in the year 1662, as follows:—

"In the present great need of earnest labourers in the Church, I am of opinion that when we meet with individuals capable of fulfilling ecclesiastical duties worthily, and who, far from entering upon so holy a calling from any temporal motives, or with a view to the possession of some benefice, are willing to endure a poor lot, if need require, in the service of Christ, that such persons may well be absolved from any vows or engagements which they have formerly contracted, and which may oppose an obstacle to this calling, for they will be serving the Church far more usefully by entering its ministry than in the retirement of the monastery. This has been ever the mind and feeling of the Church, that its true interests should be preferred before vows and obli-

gations of this description. It is this consideration which has led me, very holy father, to write to your holiness to pray you to accord to these persons and to myself the dispensation they desire. Besides this advantage to the Church which leads me to ask this grace from your holiness, the delicacy of their health would be a sufficient cause to apply for it, for there is great reason to fear that unless they take the greatest care of themselves they will be unable to endure the fatigues of work."

The dispensation was granted, and M. Hardy, whose conscientiousness would not permit him to avail himself of the remission of the voluntary poverty which a monastic life would have obliged him to undergo, resolved in attaching himself to the church of Alet to place all his property in the hands of our holy bishop.

"It is no longer my own," said he, in a letter to the Archdeacon of Alet; "when my lord bishop in his charity took me under his care, he took also what belonged to me. You have, therefore, only to tell me the use you think it best for me to apply it to, and I hope, by God's grace, I shall faithfully perform it." M. d'Alet himself replied to this proposition. "It is sufficient," he said, "that you possess the disposition of mind your letter expresses, to give you the merit before God of an entire surrender of your property. You will add to this virtue that of obedience by retaining the management of it yourself. It is right that the pastor should precede his flock. Happy would it be did no worse differences arise between bishops and their clergy."

M. Hardy was placed in charge of the seminary of Alet, and occupied besides an important office in that Church until the year 1669, when he suddenly resigned both employments to become a monk of La Trappe, under the famous Abbé de Rancé, who had lately established a reform in that monastery. He left Alet without communicating his

intention to anyone, and performed the journey to La Trappe on foot in the most rigorous season of the year. He left behind a letter for the bishop explaining his reasons for the step he had taken, and that his mind and conscience would give him no rest until he had done so. He also forbore to give the bishop any clue to his destination until he had entered upon his novitiate.

M. d'Alet, deeply afflicted to see a priest who had laboured so usefully and successfully buried in the depths of a monastery, used all his endeavours to draw him back again. In a letter, which he wrote to him, he pointed out to him the clear indications of his calling to the ministry in the Church of Alet, and the uncertainty of the one which he believed he possessed for the monastic state. He showed him that the opposition and contradictions which he had to encounter in the exercise of his ministry, and which he so much complained of, were far more efficacious for his spiritual progress in a life of holiness, when patiently endured for God, than the sweetness and peace which may be found in a life of tranquil piety. "It often happens," he added, "that, in order to avoid the contradictions and hostility which are so repugnant to our natural feelings, our self-love and pride dispose us to suffer, instead of them, others less opposed to our natural inclinations; and since interior mortifications and abnegation of self are the sure way of Christian peace, it would appear that we ought rather to distrust that tranquillity of mind we may obtain in retirement when we have withdrawn into it only for the purpose of escaping from the thorns of a state of life to which we have been called by the Church, and which would expose us to the criticisms, the contempt, and contradictions of men."


These charitable remonstrances were unavailing; the desire for a life of seclusion and of penitential discipline

rose above his attachment to M. d'Alet, and prevailed over the sound reasoning and advice with which this worthy prelate sought to retain him in what he considered to be his true vocation. He made his will by which he left a sum of eight hundred livres to the Church of Alet, and entered the monastery of La Trappe, where he lived for five or six years, and died there in the beginning of the year 1675.

In a work published by the celebrated reformer of this monastery is found an account of the last hours of M. Hardy, and of several other of the pious inmates of this far-famed community.

CHAPTER XXI.

Counsel given by M. d'Alet to M. Gourdan—many of the Clergy and Laity, in all ranks and estates of life, consult him about their spiritual concerns—many undertake the journey to Alet to obtain a personal interview—letter of advice to a Dean—another to an Archdeacon—dissuades a zealous Priest from his intention of commencing a new Religious Order—his reasons for so doing—the Port Royalists.

T was a maxim with M. d'Alet, and one he strenuously maintained with those who placed their confidence in him, never to give his consent to their departure from their proper calling. Faithful to the rule of the holy apostle,—“Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God,” (1 Cor. vii. 24)—he yielded only when the clear indications of Providence constrained him to deviate from this principle. Experience had taught him how much the natural inconstancy of the heart of man disposed him to restlessness and change, and subjected him to be deceived by hopes of a greater perfection, or some great good to be accomplished in a change of scene or circumstances.

Acting upon this principle, he dissuaded M. Gourdan from following the course taken by M. Hardy, and, in this case, he was more successful. M. Gourdan was a canon regular of St. Victor, of Paris. The fame of the monastery of La Trappe, and the wonderful reform which had been accomplished in it by the Abbé de Rancé, attracted, every year, a stream of visitors to witness the edifying spectacle of its devout and mortified occupants. M. Gourdan visited it
hers. Dom le Nain, the Prior of La Trappe, his
and co-brother, solicited M. Gourdan to join

their fraternity, and to his entreaties were added those of the abbé himself. The counsels of M. d'Alet, however, happily prevailed over the fascinations of this singular retreat. The advice of our good bishop was equally successful in the case of a canonicate which was subsequently offered to M. Gourdan, by the Bishop of Pamiers, who urged him to come and strengthen his hands in maintaining the reform of his cathedral and chapter, which was composed of canons regular of St. Augustine. The relaxation of discipline in the Abbey of St. Victor, being the prime reason given by M. Gourdan for his wish to leave it, M. d'Alet counselled him to remain in that community where God had placed him, since he did not himself participate in the declension of which he so much complained. He represented to him how great an assistance his example would be to those of his brethren who had some desire for better things, and that it would operate as a reproof to others which would in the end work for their good to edification. M. Gourdan followed this advice ; he passed the rest of his life in the Abbey of St. Victor, an edifying example to all its members.

So great was the number of individuals who wrote to M. d'Alet about their spiritual concerns, that it seems almost incredible how he could have attended as he did to such an addition to his episcopal duties. Persons of all ranks in Church and State unburdened themselves to him without reserve, and consulted him on matters of highest importance ; and he made it a duty always to respond to these applications, although the writers were personally unknown to him. Their letters, many of which have been preserved, bear testimony to the deep veneration in which this good bishop was universally held, and to the entire submission which was given to his counsels, and to the deep impression which they made on those who obtained them. We have already seen how the most eminent in the ranks of the clergy

consulted him in their difficulties. They esteemed him for his great natural gifts, but much more for that depth of light and wisdom with which it pleases God to endow chosen men whom He specially calls to enlighten the Church.

During the latter years of the life of M. d'Alet a new translation of the Holy Scriptures was undertaken by M. de Saci, Confessor of Port Royal, in conjunction with one or two other individuals of that illustrious community, esteemed both for the piety of its members and for their brilliant talents and extensive learning. The Bible of M. de Saci, originally printed in thirty-two volumes, and embracing a commentary drawn chiefly from the writings of the early Greek and Latin Fathers, may justly be considered as one of the most valuable contributions with which the Church has been enriched in any age. The translation of itself has been considered, above all others, not excepting our own admirable one, as the most excellent. It may not, perhaps, be generally known, that the British and Foreign Bible Society have adopted this translation for their French version.

"Often would I have done myself the honour of writing to you," says M. de Saci, in his letter to the Bishop of Alet, of the 17th of January, 1673, "had not the veneration which God has given me for your wisdom and piety, and also the great advantage I should derive from your help, been outweighed by the thought that every moment of your time is very precious, and devoted to occupations of such importance, that I have waited until it has pleased God to send a special occasion, which has decided me to ask your advice."

The letter then speaks of the Books of Ecclesiastes and The Wisdom, copies of which M. de Saci had forwarded to the Bishop of Alet, expressing his regret that he had not been able to communicate with him respecting these two

works as he had done with the book of Proverbs. He concludes by asking his advice with reference to a proposition made to him by the Duke de Montausier, governor to the dauphin, to write the life of Saint Louis as a model for the conduct of this young prince. He confesses with great simplicity the difficulties which stood in the way, both of undertaking the work on the one hand, and on the other of declining it. "I leave you," said he, "to decide in this affair, and I will receive your advice as the order of Providence. I hope that if you engage me to undertake it, you will have the goodness to obtain for me, by your prayers, the needful grace to fulfil it."

Many who preferred rather to see and speak with M. d'Alet than to write to him, undertook the voyage to Alet, and scarcely a month passed away that did not bring visitors to that remote corner of France.

A dean and professor of theology at Senlis complained to him, that during the thirty years he had exercised his ministry, to which he had been legitimately called, he had not enjoyed thirty days of peace, unction, or liberty, and he feared that the fruit attributed to his labours was the result of an exterior grace beneficial to others and useless to himself; that among the individuals composing his chapter, disorders prevailed which he could not hinder, such as lawsuits, contentions, and jealousies; and that having refused to sign the censure of M. Arnauld, doctor of the Sorbonne, no one would attend his lectures,—even his bishop was against him. Under such circumstances he asked counsel of M. d'Alet, hoping that he would sanction his wish to be relieved of so insupportable a yoke, and to devote himself to literary composition in writing works for the benefit of the Church.

M. d'Alet replied that it was his duty to give his theological lectures under any circumstances, and that his teachi

should be of a kind more familiar and more proportioned to the capacities of his hearers in accordance with the example of our Lord—"And with many such parables spake He the word unto them as they were able to hear it." (S. Mark 4. xxxiii.) That it was also incumbent upon him, as dean, to give his assiduous attention to the decent performance of the public services of the Church, and that he should diligently chant the offices as the Council of Trent directed; and that, if his application to study was incompatible with these two duties, which were indispensable, he should study less. That he should do all in his power, as curé, to perform with fidelity his parochial duties in spite of the opposition of his chapter by praying to God to bless his labours and his efforts and then rest in peace; for though God, indeed, requires of us to be our brother's keeper, He does not demand of us to effect their cure. "Curam exigit non curationem."

To an archdeacon who consulted him in his difficulties he gave like excellent advice. "The spirit of poverty and disinterestedness," wrote M. d'Alet, "are essential to everyone who enters the ministry, since, on receiving Orders, he makes a solemn profession of it, when repeating in the Office these words, 'Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ'—The Lord is my heritage; and that this spirit of renunciation of the world and self ought to increase in proportion as the minister of Christ advances in the orders and degrees of the Christian ministry." "As a beneficed clergyman," said he, "your responsibilities on this head are still more imperative, for the constant doctrine of the Church has ever been that the occupier of a benefice ought only to reserve for himself out of its revenues what is sufficient for a plain subsistence, and to dispense the rest for the relief of the poor and the needs of the Church, and *that*, too, notwithstanding the relaxation which has taken place in Christian life and prac-

tice in modern times in favour of avarice and cupidity. The rank you hold in the Church as archdeacon," continued M. d'Alet, "brings with it the obligation to fulfil the essential duties of the first deacons in the Christian Church, and of all those who have succeeded to this Office, to dispense the goods and treasures of the Church, and to be faithful in this administration at the peril of their lives."

The feeling of M. d'Alet with respect to the state of monastic life in France in his day may be gathered from his answer to a worthy curé, whose zeal for Christian perfection, and his love for a life of strict discipline, had filled his mind with a profound veneration for the ancient Cenobites, who divided their time between prayer and manual labour, deriving from the latter occupation a sufficiency for their own subsistence, and for the relief of the poor around them. Strongly impressed with the great examples of those pious solitaries, he had composed a new monastic rule, and sent it to M. d'Alet for his opinion, and he soon after set out for Alet to see our prelate, and communicated to him his project for reviving this institution and entering it himself.

M. d'Alet endeavoured to impress upon this zealous curé how little the pressing needs of the Church were met by increasing the number of religious orders already superabundant. "Far more to the purpose," said he, "would it be to cut down the number of these orders than to increase them, and this would soon be effected if the members of these communities could be brought to partake again of the first spirit of their institution, and to follow literally and faithfully the rules of their first founders; if this were done the Church would indeed be edified." These judicious remonstrances made a favourable impression on the mind of the curé, and although his project had received the approval

of Pope Innocent X., he submitted to the judgment of M. d'Alet and abandoned it.

By none was the Bishop of Alet more loved and esteemed than by the Port Royalists. This religious society, which was formed in the bosom of the Catholic Church of France, arose in the middle of the seventeenth century. In its ranks were numbered those eminent men who, by the elegance of their writings, contributed to raise the French language to a degree of excellence never previously attained, conferring a new lustre upon the age in which they flourished. Foremost in this little company of highly gifted minds are names whose renown has spread beyond the limits of their own country, and whose writings have attained a world-wide celebrity. The educational works of Lancelot and Arnauld, the ancient history of the pious Rollin, the learned and accurate researches of the Church historian Tillemont, the ecclesiastical writings of Fleury and Racine, the institutes of Duguet, the tragedies of Racine, the provincial letters and thoughts of Pascal, the moral essays of Nicole, the Testament of Quesnel, and the Bible of Saci, have received in our own country a high tribute of commendation. But though brilliant, indeed, are the literary and historical productions of the Port Royalists, it is in their religious and biographical writings, which are least known, that their real value lies, and in which are embalmed the spirit of their holy lives, evangelical labours, and deep Christian teaching. In a dark and godless period they revived and taught the doctrine of justification by faith in the alone merits of our crucified Redeemer, they laboured for the conversion of sinners, commenced the first Bible society, and zealously engaged in the universal dissemination of the Holy Scriptures. This is the reason why they so loved and esteemed the Bishop of Alet, in whose enlightened piety and comprehensive teaching they discerned a kindred spirit. Several

of the Port Royalists made a special journey to Alet expressly to see and converse with him ; among their number were the famous M. Nicole, C. Lancelot, and Hamon, the physician.

CHAPTER XXII.

The New Casuists—the Provincial letters of Pascal—the book entitled “The Apology for the Casuists”—letter of M. d’Alet to the Pope—five Bishops meet at Alet to examine “The Apology”—they draw up a condemnation of its doctrines.



THE darkness of that period of practical infidelity which overspread France in the seventeenth century was deepened by the publications of a class of writers belonging to the society of the Jesuits who poured forth a stream of pernicious literature inculcating doctrines which cut asunder the restraints of God's holy laws, and gave unrestrained licence to the evil passions of human nature. Long had M. d'Alet beheld with grief the sad effects of these works of the New Casuists as they were termed, when, in the year 1656, the famous provincial letters of Pascal made their appearance. Never had the cause of Truth a more brilliant advocate. To these corrupters of Christian morals it dealt a blow from which they never recovered. Great was the joy of our good prelate when he read these famous letters. He thanked God from his heart that He had raised up for the succour of the Church a man of such ability to dissipate the thick clouds which had so long obscured the light of the holy Gospel, by displaying in the light of day the monstrous principles of these masters of antichristian doctrine and of arousing the people of France from their lethargy by the elevation of his genius, the solidity of his reasoning, the delicacy of his language, and the grace and elegance with which every subject was treated that occupied his pen. M. d'Alet rejoiced in the new light that had arisen, and considered that advantage

should be taken of the opportunity to lend ecclesiastical authority to this defence of the Truth, and to help in the destruction of those pernicious doctrines which, said he, in place of attacking the passions of men by the law of God, bends the law of God to comply with the passions of men. A book which soon after made its appearance, entitled, "The Apology for the Casuists," and which reproduced in all their horrors the evil principles of the works it undertook to defend, convinced M. d'Alet that no time was to be lost, and he at once wrote a letter to Pope Alexander VII. to inform him of the increasing dangers to which the Christian religion was exposed in France. "The doctrines of salvation," wrote M. d'Alet, "comprehending the purity and integrity of the Christian faith, and the conformity of Christian life and practice to the holy rules of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, have never been exposed to more violent attacks by the temptation of the devil, the natural corruption of the human heart, and the malice of men, than at the present moment by the erroneous teaching of the Casuists. According to their view, it is no longer necessary to adhere to the doctrines of the holy Gospel or pay any regard to the authority of the Church, the pillar and ground of the Truth; all that is required according to their notions being, to know how to direct the intention and to follow a probability." "Hitherto," said he, "the teaching of error had proceeded from men who had abandoned the Church, but now we have the grief to witness the most erroneous doctrines taught by the ministers of our altars, and defended by apologies published in the face of day, to the great scandal of the whole Church, and what is the sad result?—concupiscence is re-inflamed, remorse of conscience extinguished, the virtues are stifled, darkness is put for light, and error sits upon the throne of Truth." "It is true," said he, "that all this does not appear superficially in the books of the

Casuists, who have concealed their errors under the appearance of truth ; but on a deeper examination the poison is easily discovered. Strange, indeed, is the lightness and temerity with which these new doctors decide between mortal and venial sins, very different to the mind of Saint Thomas, who, speaking on this subject, after Saint Augustine, says, '*Difficillimum invenire periculosum definere*'— Nothing is more difficult than to judge this, nothing more dangerous than to define it. For this reason it is that these matters have always hitherto been reserved for the decision of the bishops after conferring with the priests, and then only defined in provincial councils for the greater precaution. But now the most insignificant Casuist, with a shameless audacity, demands belief in his simple word and pretended authority, when all the ancient fathers have ever rested their opinions upon the principles of the eternal laws of God and the rules of the holy Gospel. The principles of these writers are absolutely subversive of all laws both Divine and human ; those who embrace them are led to abandon the restraints of religion, and follow no other guide than their own imagination, in embracing as they please an opinion more or less probable. If a bishop or any other spiritual guide raise his voice against them, they are accused of ignorance and incompetency. They go so far as to assert that these various opinions of the Casuists are so many means of facilitating the way to heaven, contrary to the word of our Lord, who has told us that there is but one way thither, and that it is a narrow one, and to enter upon it requires the greatest efforts. These doctrines of the Casuists are naturally pleasing to men who love darkness rather than light." M. d'Alet concluded his letter to the Pope by saying that the bishops of France who inherited the zeal of the Fathers of the Second Council of Chalons sur Saone, and the Sixth Council of Paris, which was convened

to condemn certain writings on the subject of penitence, full of error, were resolved to unite in condemning these evil doctrines summed up in the detestable book which had lately been published under the title of "The Apology."

M. de Chosieul, Bishop of Comminges, sharing in the alarm which the spread of these doctrines was creating in the minds of all good men, proposed to M. d'Alet the idea of drawing up a formal condemnation of the book entitled "The Apology for the Casuists," and, in order to give this denunciation additional weight and solemnity, he proposed to associate with them in this proceeding the Bishops of Pamiers, Couserans, and Bazas. This was carried into effect, and the five bishops all met together at Alet in the month of October, 1658, to make a careful examination of the book in question, and agree upon the terms of a formal censure.

They began by making a retreat together which lasted for several days, and by prayer and meditation they sought the needed grace and wisdom to deal with a subject of such importance. The book was then read and re-read, and, after undergoing a careful examination, a summary of its doctrines was drawn up, which were pronounced false, precipitate, scandalous, and calculated to corrupt the manners and to injure the discipline of the Church. This censure made a very favourable impression. It was received with joy by the well-disposed, the most eminent theologians spoke of it in terms of high commendation, and the clergy of Paris, who were a numerous body, and who had joined together in publishing a strong protest against the new doctrines, addressed a letter of thanks to the five bishops expressing the joy and consolation their proceeding had given them.

1658-1659

the apostolic

the apostolic

CHAPTER XXIII.

Presentiments of approaching trials—severe attacks of cholic—dangerous travelling in the mountains—meets with an accident—Providential escape—organized persecution—bitter hostility of the religious houses—they are prohibited from begging in the diocese—increased rancour—they spread calumnious reports—the Jesuits disseminate tracts prejudicial to the character of M. d'Alet.



Now approach the time when this true servant of God was to be exposed to greater trials and persecutions than he had ever yet encountered. It pleased God to subject him, as He did the holy Job of old, to all that the malice of the great adversary could bring to overwhelm him, and we shall see how the grace of God, which is all-sufficient, was magnified in the patience and fortitude of His servant.

M. d'Alet had for some time been impressed with a strong presentiment of the coming storm. He often mentioned his forebodings to his friends. For more than ten years it had pleased God to prepare him for these trials by extraordinary graces of holy meditation and of intimate union with Himself. He led him, so to speak, to the summit of Mount Tabor, to strengthen him by the vision of His glory, and by the taste of His ineffable delights, (the reward of His elect ones,) before leading him in the footsteps of his Lord and Master to Calvary. At this period this good prelate was frequently observed to be in a state of pious abstraction from which nothing could rouse him. It was on these occasions that it pleased God to make known to him what trials and sufferings he should be called to undergo, and which the enemy of God and man never fails to excite against those who labour successfully in the destruction of

his kingdom. On one occasion, more especially, having withdrawn for a little retirement into the garden of the episcopal residence, M. d'Alet fell into a kind of ecstasy, which lasted for several hours, and while in this state the sense of coming trials was very vividly impressed upon his mind. He communicated to a confidential friend that on this occasion it had pleased God to reveal to him that he should be exposed to the violent attacks of the powers of darkness, and that all the enemies of the Truth who were opposed to the reform he had endeavoured to establish would league together to oppress him. He also mentioned to this friend, on the same occasion, many other events that would take place, which it was impossible for anyone to foresee, and which the event verified. "But," said he, "I know that He Who has overcome the powers of darkness will be my defence, and will preserve me from the snares and calumnies of men."

Subsequently to this state of extraordinary illumination and communion with God, M. d'Alet had several severe attacks of illness, which were long and violent, and which he regarded as preliminary to other sufferings of a more trying nature than bodily pains. He peacefully awaited their coming. "These," said he, "are only the beginning of what God has prepared for me." (*Hæc sunt initia dolorum.*) These are the beginning of sorrows.

Shortly before the storm began to gather which was to burst with all its violence upon the head of our prelate, a circumstance happened to him which would have terminated his life, but for the protection of Divine Providence which was very visibly manifested. This peril, which happened as we shall briefly narrate, was generally looked upon as the beginning of the attacks which the enemy of souls was permitted to make against him. M. d'Alet had been suffering from a succession of violent attacks of choleric, which

terminated in a rupture of the bowels. This accident prevented him any longer riding on horseback, which was his accustomed mode of visiting the distant and scattered hamlets and villages in his diocese. For this reason he had recourse to a litter, borne by two mules, in which he was conveyed about when pursuing his long pastoral journeys. On arriving at any of the precipitous passes of the mountains which were dangerous to traverse, the litter was detached from the mules and carried by men. It terrified everyone to see the risk to which this good prelate exposed himself, by travelling in a litter upon the edge of the frightful precipices which abound in the Pyrennees, where no vehicle of any kind had ever passed. His friends very urgently remonstrated with him, but in vain. "I am no longer able," replied he, "to travel in any other manner, and my sheep must not be neglected; it is more than ever needful for me to watch over their safety, to visit them, to defend them, and nourish them with the Word of God; and I ought not to hesitate to expose my life to danger for them when need requires it." "But do not alarm yourselves about it," he added; "I draw the curtain when passing a precipice; I see nothing, and fear nothing."

One day, accompanied by his chaplain, he set out from Alet for the town of Limoux to conclude the business of separating the two dioceses of Alet and Narbonne. Just as they arrived at that part of the road which lay between the steep mountain slope on the one side, and precipitous rocks on the other, they met a man on horseback coming in the opposite direction. On meeting the litter with its two occupants, the horseman left the path and turned his steed a few paces up the mountain side to allow the travellers to pass. The animal, suddenly taking fright at this proceeding, started backwards, and, coming in contact with the hindmost mule, threw it off its balance. It stumbled and fell,

and hung for a few moments with its two hind feet over the brink of the precipice, leaving the litter suspended in a position of such imminent peril, that litter and mules must have gone over the precipice and been dashed to pieces had not the invisible hand of Providence sustained the burden, which was violently shaken by the efforts of the fallen animal to regain its footing. "What is this?" exclaimed M. d'Alet, who was praying, and did not perceive the danger they were in. "My lord, we are lost," his companion replied; "there is nothing left but to commend ourselves instantly to God." "Let us do so then," quietly replied the bishop. With a sudden thought, M. Ragot seized the bishop and threw him out of the litter. He followed him, and both fell together into some bushes of thorns, from which their attendants extricated them unhurt. The fallen mule, as soon as the litter was relieved of the weight of the two men, quickly recovered itself. The horseman, who beheld the accident with dismay, came forward, and, throwing himself upon his knees at the bishop's feet, implored his forgiveness for having been the cause of an accident which might have been attended with such fatal consequences. The bishop spoke to him kindly, and gave him his benediction; the travellers then re-entered the litter and continued their journey. It is somewhat remarkable, in connexion with this circumstance, that, on their arrival at Limoux, the bishop's companion, M. Ragot, was informed by M. Gerard, Doctor of the Sorbonne, and who greeted them on their arrival, and who was not aware of their coming, still less of the risk they had run, that, while engaged that morning in the office of tierce, his mind was suddenly impressed with the thought that the Bishop of Alet and he (M. Ragot) had fallen over a precipice while journeying from Alet to Limoux, and that the hand of God had preserved them from injury. It was, in fact, at the same hour in which the acci-

dent happened. On the spot where M. d'Alet and his companion had so nearly lost their lives, a friend of the bishop's erected a stone cross, which bears the following inscription, suggested by M. d'Alet :—" Impulsus eversus sum ut caderem et Dominus suscepit me"—"Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall but the Lord helped me." (Ps. cxviii. 13.)

Until the beginning of the year 1663, the legal processes undertaken against M. d'Alet proceeded either from some of the disaffected members of the clergy or laity, or from one or more of the religious houses in or out of his diocese ; but in the year 1663 this kind of persecution took the form of an organized conspiracy. The disaffected of all ranks and classes united in a league offensive and defensive against their prelate. They all put their signatures to a document which gave authority to chosen representatives to act in their name, and they subscribed a general fund to defray the expenses of the lawsuits which they resolved to bring against M. d'Alet. The chief agents in this cabal were two of the clergy, one was dean of the chapter of Alet, the other was a canon of the same Church. Their first proceeding was to appeal to the metropolitan against one of the bishop's ordonnances. This proving unsuccessful, they carried their appeal to Rome, and there obtained a judgment which referred the question to the decision of three other French bishops. Other similar attacks had been arranged by this league to be made upon M. d'Alet simultaneously from other quarters, in pursuance of which, a party of laymen sent a petition to the Father Annat, confessor to the king, full of complaints and misrepresentations against our prelate. At the same time six other lawsuits were undertaken against him in the Parliament of Toulouse, where the chief agent of these attacks had many influential friends who lent their assistance to these evil enterprises. The two conventual houses in the diocese of Alet, ungrateful for all the benefits

they had received from the bishop, lent all their aid to fan the flame of persecution against him. He had done them many services and in all their needs had lent them his assistance. Many of the members of these brotherhoods he had received into his house and entertained on various occasions. He had been present at their festivals, had taken great pains to instruct them in the doctrines and discipline which he wished to establish in his diocese, so as to render their ministry useful to the people. But the grossness of their conduct, their indocility in refusing to carry into practice his counsel and teaching, their refusal to take part in his conferences and to adopt a uniformity of language and ceremony in the administration of the Holy Communion, at length determined M. d'Alet to dispense with their services altogether. He prohibited them to preach in his diocese or act as confessors, but what mortified them most of all, he forbade them to make their accustomed excursions throughout his diocese levying contributions among the poor for their support and maintenance. He did not, however, adopt this latter course until he had applied many times, but in vain, to the provincials of these orders to check their irregularities. In spite of the bishop's injunctions, these two fraternities continued both to preach and to receive the confessions of the people, and also to levy contributions. They everywhere maligned the good bishop and endeavoured to prejudice the people against him; they condemned his principles from their pulpits, and sought every occasion to molest the faithful portion of the clergy, and to bias the people against them. In opposition to the teaching and practice of M. d'Alet, they gave absolution to hardened and impenitent sinners from whom the more enlightened clergy had withheld it.

There were several other religious communities in the neighbouring diocese to that of Alet who made common

cause in opposing our prelate, among which the Capuchins of Narbonne and Mirepoix were most conspicuous in the extent and violence of their hostility. These had also received from him the kindest treatment. The abundant alms he had bestowed upon them, and the courtesy he had always shewn them in their visits to the episcopal town, met with the same return of ingratitude as that we have just described. The result was that M. d'Alet withdrew from these brotherhoods also the licence of soliciting alms in his diocese. As they chiefly relied on this for their subsistence, he hoped that his prohibition would have the effect of diminishing their numbers, besides the relief it would afford to the poor peasantry of Alet, upon whose slender resources the incursions of these begging friars were a heavy drain. He pointed out to them how far they had departed from the spirit of their holy founder St. Francis, who had instructed his followers in the great principles of humility, of charity towards their neighbours, and of obedience to their chief pastors. He explained to them that their true position in the Church was simply that of an auxiliary body of helpers; that it was both contrary to right order, as well as an infringement of their rule, to undertake any work for the Church without the sanction of the bishops whom our Lord had constituted governors over his household. "The rule of your order," said he, "obliges you to obtain by your own industry and the labour of your hands the things necessary for your subsistence, and not to travel the country over to obtain it from the poor. 'Qui non laborat non manducet.' (2 Thess. iii. 10.) If you are in want, it is not just that you should leave the diocese that has received you and enter another to go in quest of contributions. Each diocese ought to support its own poor. Besides, you make no return for what you take away; on the contrary, you scandalise the weak members of Christ by your rash discourses,

you sow discord and create divisions, and endeavour to destroy what has cost so much time and labour to establish. It cannot be the spirit of God that moves you in these proceedings, and I feel it my duty to forbid you any longer soliciting contributions in the diocese of Alet." This prohibition, however, was of no avail; they set the bishop at defiance, levied their contributions as usual, preached against him with increased rancour, stigmatizing him as a heretic and tyrant who destroyed souls by his severity. They joined the party who were leagued in hostility against him; they entered the houses of the peasantry and incited them to rebel against his authority; and they tore up the rules of Christian discipline and practice which the clergy had distributed among their flocks; last of all, they appealed against the bishop's injunction in the Parliament of Toulouse, and having obtained the assistance of a considerable number of influential laity, they gained a decision in their favour. For a period of three years they carried on this active opposition to the evangelical labours of our good bishop, using every means they could devise to injure and oppress him. One of their most cruel proceedings was the endeavour they made to destroy his character. They knew well how specially important that must be to a bishop in consequence of its essential necessity for the welfare of the Church he governs. ("A bishop must be blameless."—1 Tim. xiii. 2.) They tried all means, therefore, to destroy the idea which universally prevailed of the exalted piety and virtue of this prelate, and to carry out their purpose, they did not hesitate to spread the most abominable slanders in every part of France in which they had establishments. In the spirit of those Casuistic doctrines which M. d'Alet had so severely condemned, they declared, in justification of their conduct, that he had treated them so badly that they saw no evil in defaming his character. The report of the gross scandals

which they put in circulation soon reached the provinces, and became the subject of general conversation. Some, not knowing what to think, wrote to their friends to enquire into the truth of the reports. Others, more credulous, were surprised that there were any persons who still placed confidence in the maligned prelate, but those who knew him best wrote to their friends in the ministry to acquaint them with the slanderous reports which the enemies of religion were circulating to his discredit.

It would serve no good purpose to give a detailed account of the shocking accusations with which these Capuchin brethren assailed the character of our good prelate; it may suffice to mention one, to show the nature of the bitter cup he had to drink, and the patience and meekness with which he bore the trial.

Two pious ladies of Pezenas, who entertained a deep regard and esteem for the character of the Bishop of Alet, and who were delighted with the good which had been effected in his diocese through the labours of the Sisterhood of the Regents, came and offered him their services to join the sisterhood. He received them. They had three sisters in the town of Albi, one of whom was married; the other two were inmates of a religious establishment. Upon the occasion of a visit of some of the Capuchin fraternity to these two sisters, they informed them that they knew for a fact, upon testimony which could not be doubted, that one of their sisters who had joined the Regents in the diocese of Alet was in a state of pregnancy in consequence of sinful intercourse with the Bishop of Alet. Struck with consternation at this dreadful news, these two poor girls, thus grossly imposed upon, flew to their married sister, to pour their grief into her ears, and to consult with her what to do to remedy so great a scandal. The less credulous sister calmed their fears, and then sought the Archdeacon of Albi,

to whom she related what she had heard, and begged him to write to Alet without delay, and dissipate a report that dishonoured her family and scandalized the Church. The archdeacon assured her she might rest in peace, and that so horrible a calumny would most certainly recoil upon the head of those who had been the authors of it. He wrote immediately to Alet, but, out of delicacy and respect for the good bishop, alluded to the matter in covered terms, in a letter to his chaplain, dated 25th of June, 1663.

"The good Madame d'Arnaudin," he wrote, "the eldest sister of two of your Regents, has just been to see me in a state of great distress. She has been greatly alarmed, and I have endeavoured to set her mind at rest. I have promised her to write to you, and ask you for your assistance in this matter. We have fallen upon days of persecution and attack from which the holiest can find no shelter. Persons whose profession it is to pass their lives in continual penitence, under a rule of strict discipline, believe that they are rendering service to God by defaming the character of virgins, not sparing even the holiest among the chief pastors of the Church. I cannot particularize, and did I not feel assured that this letter, which I address to my brother the Chancellor, would be faithfully delivered to you, I should scarcely have ventured to write to you even thus guardedly. Adored be our Lord in all His ways. It is just and right that the disciple be not treated better than his Master."

Previous to their communicating this slanderous report to the two Sisters of Albi, the Capuchins had disseminated it in Toulouse and other places, and even in Paris. It became the common talk of the day. Whenever any of the residents of Alet appeared they were immediately interrogated on the subject. Nor were the attacks of these Capuchin friars confined to the bishop. Knowing well how highly he esteemed the services of the Sisterhood of

Regents, and how dear they were to him, they bent their energies by similar means to destroy the usefulness of these excellent women. The truth was, they were deeply chagrined to perceive the increasing esteem and affection of the population for these good Sisters. They felt that they were in consequence losing their influence, and they feared that this change of feeling towards them would in time dry up the source of alms and contributions upon which they depended for their subsistence. Consequently, in the course of their private visits, they spread the most infamous reports respecting the sisterhood, and publicly from the pulpit denounced them in the most violent terms.

While this fire of persecution was raging on every side around our prelate, the society of the Jesuits, who had never forgiven him for the causes which about sixteen years previously had led to a cessation of intercourse between them, were not idle in conspiring for his humiliation. Their opposition, which had been carried on in secret, while our prelate stood high in the esteem and affection of the king, was now openly pursued; for the bishop had fallen under the displeasure of the Court upon the subject of the famous formula which the king was endeavouring at this time to force upon the consciences of his people. This was an opportunity for oppressing our prelate, of which the Jesuits were not slow to take advantage, and they at once placed themselves at the head of the party who were seeking to ruin him. To the young members of this society was assigned the task of composing libellous tracts prejudicial to the character of M. d'Alet, which were printed and circulated in all directions. Copies of these shameful productions were sent even to Rome. By means of their provincial establishments these papers were introduced into private houses; they became the topic of general conversation, and were read by all classes; they were seen in the shops, in the markets, and in

places of public resort. The Jesuit Father Annat, confessor to the king, made choice of some of them to read to his majesty, but without much success, for the king expressed his indignation that one of the greatest bishops in his kingdom should be spoken of in such terms, and requested the Archbishop of Paris to make the closest investigation into the origin of such reports.

The good bishop was not ignorant of these proceedings. A gentleman of Montpellier, attached to the suite of the Prince de Conti, had received copies of these defamatory prints as they were issued, and forwarded them to M. d'Alet that he might know what his enemies were doing. He read them in the solitude of his chamber; they pained him exceedingly, but his greatest sorrow was for the authors of these wicked publications when he reflected upon the guilt which they incurred by producing them. Deeply affected, he withdrew into himself, and, in the stillness of his chamber, passed several days in prayer and in meditating upon those words of our Lord—"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The next step which the enemies of M. d'Alet took, was to draw up a series of accusations against him, materials for which were abundantly furnished by the Capuchin brethren who spread themselves over the diocese of Alet to collect all the information they could from every person they met with who had a word to say against our prelate. When this document was completed, it was forwarded to the *Perè* Annat, who presented it to the king. The result was that the Archbishop of Paris was commanded a second time to write to M. d'Alet, and acquaint him with these accusations, that he might be in a position to defend himself, and be

him to give him such a reply as would enable him to silence those who he was assured calumniated him. "M. d'Alet immediately complied with this request, and despatched a letter of reply to the archbishop by the Abbé de Barillon, who could give, by word of mouth, any further information the archbishop might require. "I should not, my lord," wrote the bishop in this letter, "have taken the liberty of replying at such length to your letter, had you not assured me of your wish that I should do so to enable you to refute the unfounded charges which have been made against me, and to deliver me by this means from the oppression which I confess I well deserve for my sins; but it is not just that the Church, to whom I owe not only my reputation, but my life also, should suffer for them." This letter was read by the archbishop with great satisfaction, and soon after its reception, the authors of the calumnies were discovered; they were two persons whom the Bishop of Alet had excommunicated, the Sieur Larade and the Curé of Bezu. The former had obtained in an irregular manner an official position in a collegiate establishment that our prelate had erected in his diocese for the instruction of the clergy, but the scandalous living of this man, and his utter incapacity, obliged M. d'Alet to interdict him. The Curé of Bezu, after being convicted of adultery and many other crimes, had been deposed and dismissed from the diocese. The former of these two men was received by the Jesuits into their college in Paris. The Capuchins gave an asylum to the latter, and both confessed to the Abbé de Barillon that they had furnished the materials which these two societies made use of to destroy the character of our holy prelate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Grave charges preferred against M. d'Alet—is strongly urged to make a journey to Paris to defend himself—resolves not to leave his diocese—replies in writing to the charges against him—completely refutes them—his tranquillity under these heavy trials.



THE enemies of M. d'Alet, far from losing courage at the failure of their schemes, renewed their attacks in real earnest in the month of June following. They prepared another document, fuller and more methodically drawn up than the former, replete with many grave and serious accusations, expressed with much art, and with all the semblance of truth. The signatures of several gentlemen of the diocese of Alet having been attached, it was forwarded to Paris by two deputies, who delivered it into the hands of the Jesuit Father Annat, the king's confessor. This individual lost no time in communicating its contents to the king. "It is with deep grief," again wrote M. de Perefix, Archbishop of Paris, to M. d'Alet, "that I have to acquaint you with the continued calumnies that are put forth against you. Grave charges have been preferred to the king attested by the signatures of many in your diocese, but his majesty will not believe you capable of the things imputed to you, and will not condemn you unheard; and it is by his command I write to advise you of the accusations that are made against you, and to tell you what he expressed to me this morning, that it would be a consolation to him to see you and hear your justification from your own mouth rather than receive it in writing.

I have not lost a moment in writing to you, that you may at once prepare for the journey, should you be disposed to make it. In my poor judgment it is a thing very necessary for the interests of the Church, as well as your own reputation, and to put an end to these attacks which are being continually made upon your character."

The archbishop considered it to be a matter of such deep importance that M. d'Alet should lose no time in setting out for Paris, that he wrote to the Bishop of Couserans, an intimate friend of our prelate's, to use all his influence to urge him to this course. From the Prince de Conti, too, and from many other of his most valued friends, our prelate received urgent solicitations to make this journey, so as to justify himself in person before the Court.

M. d'Alet having, according to his invariable practice, laid this matter before God in earnest prayer, resolved to answer the charges made against him by a written refutation, and to remain quietly in his diocese to protect his flock from the adverse influence of the disaffected laity and other enemies of religion whom he well knew would take advantage of his absence to do much evil, and to disturb the peace and good order which a watchful pastor's presence effectually insures.

It pleased God to bestow His blessing very visibly on the course our prelate took on this occasion. His written reply to the series of charges against him was read to the king who spoke of it in terms of admiration. It produced an effect at Court as beneficial to his cause as his friends had expected his presence would have produced. The Archbishop of Auch, no less inimical to M. d'Alet than the Father Annat, pronounced it to be unanswerable. The Archbishop of Paris wrote immediately to our prelate to express the joy it had given him, that he had so completely in his replies, refuted the charges of his oppressors. M. d'Alet,

however, was not content with sending these replies, he wrote out an account of all the cases upon which the accusations had been based and addressed it to the king and his council. He sent this new document to M. Ferret, grand vicar of the Archbishop of Paris, requesting him to communicate it to as many learned authorities in the Church as he could, and to obtain their opinions in writing to the difficult points it contained. M. Ferret faithfully performed this service for our bishop, and obtained the signatures of more than thirty doctors of divinity, and as they all agreed in the decisions and sentiments of M. d'Alet, it had a marvellous effect in placing the goodness of his cause in the light of day, and was universally regarded as a complete refutation of every charge that had been advanced against him.

The numerous and organised persecutions which have formed the subject of this and the three preceding chapters, would have been enough to break the spirit and shorten the days of the most courageous and most robust in mind and body; but our good prelate was wonderfully supported by his Divine Master, and while this storm of trial was raging around him, was enabled to pursue the duties of his episcopate in peace and tranquillity. "I must tell you, for your consolation, my very dear brother," he thus writes to M. Ferret, in Paris, "in reply to the latter portion of your letter, that I never felt a deeper or more constant peace than I do in the midst of all these persecutions that press upon me from every quarter, and that I never experienced a more tender love, or, as it seems to me, a more effectual one, than I do at the present moment for those who I believe to be the authors of them, and for all other persons who take any part in them. It seems to me that I never prayed for my own soul with a deeper earnestness than I do for them. But pray do not mistake these expressions for

a proof of any great courage of my own, or as indicating any extraordinary charity. I greatly fear that the corruption of human nature mingles with it all. Pray for me that it may please God to teach me how to make that use of all these embarrassments, that He intends I should do, for His own glory and my spiritual advancement.

CHAPTER XXV.

The controversy of nature and grace—the “Augustinus” of Cornelius Jansen—brief account of the dispute which arose on the publication of this book—M. d’Alet determines to remain neutral—refuses to sign the letter of the French bishops to the Pope—conferences in Alet on the subject of the five propositions—M. Arnauld puts some pointed questions to M. d’Alet—who studies the subject in dispute—sides with the Jansenists—Assembly of Clergy in Paris—decrees—letter of M. d’Alet to the King—and the Assembly—their effect—M. de Pamiers—refuses to sign the formulary—declaration of the King—the Religieuses of Port Royal—Papal decree—Mandate of the Bishop of Alet—great impression made by it—three bishops follow his example—the Gallican Church—death of Pope Alexander VII.—M. d’Alet urged to come to Paris—refuses—the Archbishop of Sens and Bishop of Chalons negotiate for a settlement of the dispute—letter to the Pope drawn up by M. Arnauld—the four bishops sign it—M. d’Alet convokes a synod and signs the formulary—peace of Clement IX.—soon broken.



IN the great theological controversy which agitated the Church of France through the latter half of the seventeenth century, the subject of this memoir occupied a prominent position. How he was drawn into the discussion, the part which he took, and which in a striking degree exhibits the salient points of his character and the courage and firmness of his disposition, will now be briefly narrated.

It was not a new question upon which the disputants of that day turned their weapons against each other. It has been remarked that “the great controversy of nature and grace has been a fruitful source of dispute even from apostolic days; that necessity and free will, faith and works, grace and merit, election and free redemption, have been watchwords of a debate which has undergone alternate periods of excitement and repose, but which has nev

ceased to divide the opinions of mankind, and will perhaps continue to do so until the end. That, from the times of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Pelagians and Augustinians, the Jesuits and Jansenists, to the Arminians and Calvinists of the present day, the evils of such discussion have been sufficiently manifest."

This great controversy was suddenly aroused in France during the life-time of M. d'Alet, by the appearance of a work entitled the "Augustinus," written by Cornelius Jansen, Bishop of Ypres, a person of singular piety and profound learning. He had devoted twenty years of his life to this undertaking, for which purpose, it was stated, he had ten times read through the whole of the writings of St. Augustine, and thirty times carefully perused and compared those parts of them which related to the Pelagian controversy. He died of the plague in the year 1638, while ministering to the stricken members of his flock. With his dying hands he completed the last lines of his work, the labour of so many years. It was published by his friends after his decease, and appeared in 1640. Great was the excitement it produced amongst the Jesuits. To have taken the Protestant side in the great controversy was a crime in their eyes which could never be pardoned, and a contest ensued which raged with great fury in France for a number of years. The Jesuits, beaten by the pen, resorted to other weapons. The Pope, who was under their control, pronounced in their favour, and the civil power of France, which was also subject to their influence, was urged to interfere. The Jansenists, as they were termed, were cruelly oppressed and persecuted; fines, banishments, and rigorous imprisonments were everywhere inflicted; numbers perished in prison and in exile; but the crowning blow was the destruction of the monastery of Port Royal, which gave the finishing stroke to the cause of which the mem-

bers of that celebrated institution had been the chief champions.

Before proceeding with this narrative, it may be useful to give a brief account of the progress of this controversy. While, then, the Jesuits exerted all their influence to obtain the suppression of the work of the Bishop of Ypres, the friends of the deceased prelate strained every nerve to hasten its publication. On its appearance, a war of pamphlets and other writings immediately ensued on both sides. The most remarkable literary production which this contest called forth was the "Provincial Letters" of Pascal. In these writings the Jesuits were severely handled, and their doctrines and policy thoroughly exposed. From the effects of these terrible letters the Jesuits never recovered. The charges which they brought against the work of Jansenius were principally that it denied free will to man, made God the author of evil, and that it rejected the doctrine of universal redemption. In the following year, 1641, it was condemned by Pope Urban VIII, who declared that it revived the proposition of Baius, which had already been condemned by Pius V. and Gregory XIII. The controversy continued to rage in Paris for several years with great fury. At length Nicolas Cornet, a Jesuit, drew up five propositions, which were alleged to have been extracted from the work of Jansenius, and were declared to embody the opinions of his work, but so artfully and ambiguously worded as to be capable of two opposite constructions. These propositions were submitted to the Sorbonne, and by the members of that theological institution they were finally condemned in the year 1649. But this did not terminate the dispute, and it was decided to appeal to the Pope, whereupon a letter was drawn up by the Bishop of Vabres and Vincent de Paul at the institution of St. Lazarus. This document received the signatures of eighty-eight French bishops, and was forwarded to Pope

Innocent X., then in his eighty-second year. Another letter was sent to the Pope at the same time, signed by eleven bishops, begging him to leave the matter undetermined. Innocent X. took the matter into consideration, and condemned each of the five propositions. A bull embodying this decision was promulgated throughout France in the year 1653; a formulary was also drawn up, and a decree issued by the Crown for its signature. The opposite party, on the other hand, maintained that the five propositions were neither contained in the work of Jansenius nor were fairly deducible from it. To decide this point, thirty-nine bishops met in Paris, in March, 1654. Ten meetings were held, and the result arrived at was, that the Pope had condemned the five propositions as contained in the work of Jansenius, and also in the sense of Jansenius. Innocent X. approved of this judgment, and confirmed it by a brief dated September of the same year. He soon after died, and was succeeded by Alexander VII., who, in the year 1656, made a new constitution confirming the acts of his predecessor. This constitution of Pope Alexander VII. was promulgated in France by order of a general assembly of clergy held in Paris in the following year, which declared that the five propositions were not only heretical, but that they were likewise extracted from Jansenius, and were condemned in the sense in which they were stated in his work. This assembly also drew up a formulary which received the assent of the king, and by royal decree was required to be signed by the whole body of clergy; and by all who had the instruction of youth. It was to be subscribed as an article of faith, and was expressed in the following terms:—"I condemn from my inmost soul, and by word of mouth, the doctrine of the five propositions which are contained in the work of Cornelius Jansenius, a doctrine which is not that of St. Augustine, whose sentiments Jansenius has misinter-

puted." The opposite party refused their signatures. "No one," said they, "is obliged to submit in his conscience to the judgment of the Pope on a question of fact." On matters of faith they were prepared to yield obedience; on matters of fact they took the liberty of acting on their own judgment, and would, therefore, as far as the latter were concerned, maintain a respectful silence. In thus refusing to submit their reason and conscience to the control of any human authority, they acted in conformity to the Divine Word, given to man to be a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path, and which tells him to call no man master upon earth; to try the spirits whether they be of God; to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.

This answer was the signal for the commencement of persecution; the Court, the Jesuits, and the clergy generally, united in one common purpose, to oppress the party who were stigmatized as Jansenists. Father Quesnel, a priest of the Oratory, was the last principal leader in this great revival, and the debate, which lasted little short of a century, wore itself out at last, and ceased at his death, which took place at Amsterdam, in the year 1719.

Though all the friends of our good prelate took part against the Bishop of Ypres, M. d'Alet himself kept firm to his determination to preserve an equal neutrality and charity towards both sides. So anxious were both parties to win him over to their respective cause that they spared no efforts to accomplish their design. He received letters innumerable from the Jesuit party, all aiming to prejudice him against their antagonists, the Port Royalists, and no exaggeration was spared to render them odious to him. This was not the way to convert our prelate; it had the opposite effect, and made him doubly guarded against being led into error. He determined to keep aloof from the controversy. The subject of it appeared to him to have little to do with the

essence of religion, and with the guidance of souls with which he was wholly occupied. For a period of ten years he kept his resolution, and, from his quiet and distant diocese, he sighed to see the peace of the Church destroyed by controversy in which the rule of charity was too often disregarded, and prayed to God to unite those whose divisions he foresaw would be productive of evil consequences to the Truth.

He would never allow any discussion upon the subject in his presence, and advised his clergy to avoid studying it as tending to nourish the principle of curiosity, and draw their attention away from their great and chief duties. But the excitement which this great controversy aroused throughout France was so great, that the king at last took measures to enforce a uniformity of sentiment on the point in dispute, and it became then no longer possible for M. d'Alet to remain neutral. In the year 1650, the famous letter of the French bishops to the Pope was drawn up, praying him to condemn the five propositions. The Bishop of Alet was earnestly requested to sign it. There was no bishop in France at that time whose opinion had such weight as that of M. d'Alet. He had at that time a very vague idea of the subject in dispute, and on receiving this application, felt himself bound to study it. It happened at that juncture that M. de Maurice, a pious and learned theologian, and a doctor of the Sorbonne, well acquainted with the disputed questions of the day, was paying a visit to Alet. Our prelate, glad of the occasion, invited his guest to discuss the subject at a series of conferences to which he invited his friend and neighbour the Bishop of Pamiers. M. de Maurice gladly assented, and gave so lucid an exposition of the sentiments of St. Augustine on the contested points, that the Bishop of Pamiers and some others who were present, and who having been trained in the school of St. Sulpice, where

they had received an opposite bias, were unable to make any reply. During the stay of the Bishop of Pamiers at Alet, the two prelates applied themselves diligently to the study of the five propositions; day and night they joined with the clergy assembled in earnest prayer to God for wisdom to discover the Truth, and for His direction in the important matter of the signature. They likewise ordered public prayers to be offered up in their respective dioceses for this purpose. At length, after much careful deliberation, they both resolved to withhold their signatures. They perceived, as many others had done, that the truth had been artfully concealed beneath the studied phrases of the five propositions, and though the error these contained was very manifest, still, in condemning them *in toto*, they would also condemn the truth with which that error was so ingeniously intermingled.

Great was the disappointment of M. Vincent and his friends at this refusal; again and again he wrote to M. d'Alet in the strongest terms, but in vain. Our prelate had taken his resolution not hastily, but after much thought and prayer, and nothing could turn him from it. It was proposed to make some alteration in the letter to meet his objections, but these lay deeper than any alteration they were willing to make, and he remained firm. He equally refused to sign the letter addressed to the Pope by the opposite party, begging him *not* to pronounce on propositions which had been hastily conceived, had been ambiguously expressed, and which treated of the most difficult points in theology. "I honour," said he, in answer to their requisition, "and sincerely respect all my fellow members in the episcopate; I wish to be in friendship with all of them, and to take part against none; I shall endeavour to profit by the wisdom of both sides in this discussion, and until it shall please God to calm the minds, which are becoming more and more

excited upon these subtle and thorny questions, I shall content myself with prayers and sighs and shall try to remain in charity with all."

This neutrality disappointed both sides. The Jesuits engaged and paid a number of spies whom they stationed in every part of his diocese, and for many years tried in vain to fix upon him the charge of being a Jansenist. Their great opponent, M. Arnauld, was very anxious that the Bishop of Alet should declare his real sentiments, and with the view of drawing him out, he sent him the following case of conscience on which he asked his opinion. "A learned theologian," said he, "has carefully and thoughtfully read through the work of Jansenius; he is quite convinced that the five propositions are not contained in that book, and that its learned author has inculcated therein no other than the pure doctrine of St. Augustine, which is beyond censure, and that of St. Thomas which has been received by the whole Church; but, on the other hand, he sees that Pope Alexander VII. has positively declared, by his bull of October, 1656, that the five propositions *are* those of Jansenius, and are condemned in the sense in which that bishop conceived them. He would, therefore, ask M. d'Alet this question. Ought he to change his opinion upon the authority of this bull, and is he obliged to believe, against his conviction, that Jansenius has taught a different doctrine to that of St. Augustine; or, if remaining convinced that Jansenius has taught no other doctrine, may he, without wounding his conscience, subscribe to the bull of Alexander VII. and to the formulary proposed by the bishops? In the second place, would he be justified in saying, with all due respect to the holy see, that Alexander VII. has been wrongly informed respecting the facts of the case, and thus deprive the Jesuits of the occasion to do dishonour to the true grace of Jesus Christ by condemning in this disguised

way the doctrine of St. Augustine who has magnified its glory?"

True to the principles which he had imbibed in his early youth, and which had been confirmed and strengthened by the training he had undergone at St. Lazarus, disliking controversy, and strongly prejudiced in favour of submission to the authority of superiors, M. d'Alet returned a short and precise answer to M. Arnauld as follows:—"That those persons who were required to make such a subscription might, and indeed ought to make it, however persuaded they may previously have been that the sense of Jansenius touching the five propositions was no other than that of St. Augustine." M. Arnauld, surprised at this reply, thought it right to ask M. d'Alet to explain himself more fully, and mentioned the reasons which prevented him agreeing with his decision. In a second letter he proposed to M. d'Alet the three following questions:—

1. Would it be right, upon a question of fact, to take the opinion of another, even though he may be high in authority, against our own conviction?

2. Would it be right, upon the assurance of another, to sign and attest anything for a fact which we know to be false?

3. Would it be right to maintain silence, on a definition we believe to be erroneous, out of respect to those who had framed it?

These precise questions embarrassed our good bishop. He regretted he had given his advice so quickly on a subject he had not sufficiently studied, and from that moment he resolved, instead of replying again, to make himself master of it, so that he might be able to form a right judgment if in future he should be forced into the discussion. He set to work resolutely and read all that had been published by both parties from the beginning of the dispute.

The fear of taking the wrong side led him to offer up many fervent prayers for the Divine guidance. He prayed unceasingly for grace to know the truth, and for courage to defend it. It pleased God to bless the diligent studies of His servant. Soon the mists of early prejudices dissolved away, and his eyes were open to the light which shone in the excellent writings of those theologians who have defended the teaching of St. Augustine. Not all the artifices of their adversaries could hinder him from perceiving that it was the heavenly doctrine which this great father taught which was the real question at issue, and that the truth of that doctrine was the concealed object of their hostility.

The time had arrived when M. d'Alet felt that he could no longer remain neutral. The Truth was attacked. To contend for the faith once delivered to the saints was the duty of every Christian, and when the deep designs of the concealed enemies of true religion became apparent he no longer hesitated what course to pursue. The path of duty was plain, and from that moment he became the intrepid defender of a cause which at first he feared to embrace.

It was in the year 1661, on the occasion of the circular letter of Louis XIV. to the bishops of France, that M. d'Alet began to take part in this memorable contest. The occasion was one that rendered it impossible for him to remain neutral. A frightful picture of Jansenism had been given to the king. It had been represented to him as a heresy which was not only making sad havoc in the Church, but which menaced also the State with danger. The king took alarm; a council was called. It was resolved that, for the well-being of the Church, and for the repose of his majesty's subjects, Jansenism should be extirpated. It was proposed to call a national council as the surest way of imposing submission upon the whole kingdom, but this plan not meeting with the approval of Cardinal Mazarin, at that time Prime Minister

of France, it was decided to call together an Assembly of Clergy, which met in Paris in January, 1661. The result of their deliberations was as follows :—

1. That the bishops should be required to sign the formulary under penalty.
2. That the execution of the decrees of this assembly should be enforced by the authority of the Crown.
3. That the Courts of Parliament should be prohibited from receiving any appeals against such decrees.
4. That no clergyman should be instituted into a cure until he had signed the formulary.

And lastly, That the Augustinus of Jansenius should be prescribed, together with all other works which had been written in its defence.

Thereupon, a circular letter from the king was despatched to all the bishops, requiring them to conform without loss of time to all these demands. Many at once complied ; a small minority stood out against this irregular proceeding, but they were in great perplexity. The danger was imminent, and there was no time to lose. They received information that the prelates at Court were determined to push matters to their extremity. In this dilemma their eyes were turned to the Bishop of Alet. He had not yet spoken. He was the only man, they said, who could save the Church of France at this crisis. The great esteem in which he was held by the whole Church would lend to his voice a weight which would open the eyes of all good men to the dangers which threatened. Many would follow his example ; many others would be deterred from a wrong course by shame. The great deference which was paid to him, even by those in authority, would perhaps stay the storm. "The Church," they said, "calls upon him ; it is an occasion in which he ought to follow the example of the saints, who have appeared in similar times of peril, and, issuing from their

solitudes and caverns, have entered the courts of emperors and loudly proclaimed to all that they came forth to raise their voice against the iniquity, lest by their silence they should appear to approve of it." The few bishops who thus conferred together sent a memorial to M. d'Alet in these terms. He was already sufficiently aware of the irregularity of the proceedings of the Assembly of Clergy, and of the dangers likely to result from it, and he had resolved to sign nothing until a subject of such grave importance had been properly submitted to the episcopal body and had been maturely and canonically considered. Upon receipt, therefore, of this memorial, he resolved to address a letter of remonstrance to the king and to the assembly. The letter to the king ran as follows :—

SIRE,

The profound respect which I feel for your majesty and which has hitherto caused me to be silent, obliges me now to write in reply to the letter which it has pleased your majesty to address to me on the subject of the Assembly of Clergy, and of the articles which that assembly has drawn up and sent to all the bishops in your kingdom concerning the five propositions. I beg your majesty to pardon me, if in a matter of such importance to the Church, and one which may cause much trouble to its governors, I take the liberty of representing in all humility the difficulties I find in the deliberations of this assembly. I assure your majesty that I have no other motive in doing so than to acquit myself of the indispensable obligation which the rank I hold in the Church puts upon me to serve and succour her on all occasions when any violence is done to her orders or her discipline, as it seems to me has been done on this occasion, inasmuch as the assembly has assumed an authority which it does not possess, and which neither the holy canons, customs, nor the consent of its constituents can give it. It has proceeded to decree pains and penalties against those bishops who may not agree with its decisions, and who have an equal right to judge, so that by this usurped authority over the bishops of the Church, it takes from them not only the free and legitimate use of the key of their power, but that also of their wisdom and discernment so essential to the exercise of their ministry ; making no difference between them

and the general body of believers ; above all, adopting means for the execution of their pretended decrees, which appear likely to form a very dangerous precedent for the future, and one that may deprive the Church of that freedom so necessary for the preservation of her discipline and the purity of the faith, that may disquiet your majesty's subjects and cause trouble in the state ; and there is nothing that can contribute so much to its quietude and stability as the zeal and piety of kings in preserving the discipline of the Church and in defending her liberties. I beseech your majesty not to take amiss the freedom with which I have endeavoured to express my difficulties and my thoughts, and that you would have the kindness to take them into consideration, especially as they have been suggested by the law of the Church, from which a bishop ought never to depart, and following which I cannot, without betraying my conscience and my ministry, execute the decrees of the assembly, or require others to do so, and which I am persuaded your majesty will not force upon any one, but that your zeal and piety, Sire, will lead you rather to adopt a legitimate and canonical way to appease and terminate the troubles excited by these disputes in the Church of France. I pray the Divine Goodness to fill your majesty with the same wisdom and discernment which in times of old the wisest of kings besought the Lord to give him, and who like you, Sire, had been from early youth placed by God over His adopted people, so that in this deeply important question your majesty may neither do nor judge anything unworthy the approval of our Sovereign Lord.

Alat, 22nd June, 1661.

Our prelate wrote in similar terms to the assembly of clergy. He forwarded these letters to a trustworthy friend in Paris ; but notwithstanding all the precautions he took to keep them secret they soon became known ; innumerable copies were struck off and circulated in all directions. The effect was very great. The adherents of St. Sulpice and St. Lazarus were in consternation. To many persons these questions gave a new light, and timid men, who feared to take a difficult course where no bishop had led the way, felt their courage revive. Still, there were many who were greatly embarrassed, and none more so than the Bishop of Pamiers, whose early education at St. Sulpice had fixed :-

his mind certain ultramontane principles with regard to obedience to the Pope which made him suspicious of all persons who did not conform to them. On the other hand, he had the greatest veneration for the character of M. d'Alet, and confidence in his wisdom, and it was not without pain he saw himself reduced to the alternative of either forsaking the guidance of so holy a man, or of abandoning the principles to which he was so sincerely and religiously attached. While this inward struggle was going on, his old preceptors and friends left no means untried to strengthen him in the prejudices of his youth, and to separate him from his pious friend. Several bishops tried to persuade him that it was impossible for him on this occasion to do otherwise than yield obedience to the pope and king. He was nearly carried away with the torrent, but his love for M. d'Alet saved him. He resolved to do nothing hastily. To walk in a new path, without the guide of his later years, was too painful to think of. At the request of his friends of St. Sulpice and St. Lazarus, he had written letter after letter to M. d'Alet in the endeavour to change his opinions, but in vain. These friends urged him to use every exertion to win over a bishop whose letters to the king and others they said had done more harm to the Church than the whole body of Jansenists. While thus they endeavoured to persuade him through his friends, they tried to alarm him through other channels, but threats and persuasions were alike ineffectual. Tranquil as in times of profoundest peace, M. d'Alet applied himself to his pastoral duties with the same diligence as formerly, without neglecting, in concert with other bishops, to take such steps as seemed necessary to meet the threatening danger.

The Jesuits gave the king no rest, and at their solicitations (1st May, 1662) a new decree was issued by royal authority requiring the bishops who had not yet signed the *formulary*

to do so instantly. A copy of this decree, with a letter from the king, was sent to M. d'Alet, who was requested to advise the Crown within two months that he had performed this duty. This time M. d'Alet made no reply; had he done so he could but have repeated the objections he had already given, but he was determined to sign nothing. Great efforts were made by his friends to overcome his scruples. They represented to him that if he did not give way his ruin was certain; and not only that, but all the work he had done in his diocese would be destroyed. "I pray to God," said one of his friends, "that a virtue, a holiness, a reputation, such as we behold in the character of M. d'Alet, so rare in this age, may suffer no decrease or alteration." The Prince of Conti, in alarm, wrote to him, beseeching him to bend somewhat to the pressure of circumstances. He was immovable. They were grieved at his inflexible firmness though they could not help respecting it. They assured him the peril of resistance was extreme, but it mattered not; he was not in the least disturbed. Incapable of paying the least attention to his personal interests, his only care was for his flock, whom he committed unceasingly into the hands of the Chief Bishop of the Church, Jesus Christ. He never lost sight, in all these trials of the great principles of conduct, (so well known and approved in theory, but when the pressure comes followed in practise by few,) namely,—“That we must not regard with too human a love the work which God has confided to us, nor allow the fidelity we owe to the Sovereign Ruler of all to be prejudiced by our zeal for its preservation; that our first duty is to obey His laws when they are clearly understood; and, after that, to leave the consequences of our obedience in the hands of that Divine Providence, which is all powerful to turn away the harm that may ensue from it.” Such has been the example and practice of the great bishops of antiquity,—St. Basil, St. Athanasius, St. Chrysos-

tom, and St. Hilary, whom the Church honours as Fathers, and whom M. d'Alet took for his models.

At the beginning of the following year, an effort was made to bring about an accommodation, and several meetings were held in Paris for this purpose by the chief dignitaries of the Church, and both sides met in consultation. M. d'Alet was urgently pressed to make a journey to Paris and lend his aid to this work of peace. "He could not," he said, "leave his diocese; the safety and welfare of his flock, and the preservation of the work of reform which he had established, required his constant presence."

The conferences proceeded; all seemed satisfactory; and the result was forwarded to the Pope. But the peace so much desired was still far off; the Pope, indeed, expressed his satisfaction with the work of these labourers for peace, but the formulary *must* be signed; and in July following the Pope issued a new brief to that effect. Thus were all hopes disappointed, and this brief, which was looked forward to as the harbinger of peace, became the signal for the renewal of the conflict. The defenders of the Bishop of Ypres, sincerely condemning all error anathematized by the Holy See, refused to attribute any to the work of Jansenius, and feared that under the vague expression of "*the sense of Jansenius*," which neither the Pope nor the Jesuits would explain, the latter were only seeking to condemn the doctrines of grace and to establish those of the Jesuit Louis Molina upon their ruins, and subsequent events verified their suspicions.

M. d'Alet perceiving that a sincere endeavour for peace had been rejected by the bishops, and by the Crown, which had declared in favour of the Jesuits, felt that he must prepare for new contests. His high character and great influence drew upon him the chief attention. It was well known that the other bishops who had stood firm received counsel and support from him, and that the defenders of

Jansenius, far superior to their adversaries by their talents and eloquent writings, would infallibly gain their cause at the tribunal of the public while contending under a chief so popular as M. d'Alet. For this reason they resolved to gain him over or destroy him. The Prince of Conti again besought him to sign the formulary and save himself from the impending danger. "I find consolation," replied our prelate, who endeavoured to calm the fears of his friend, "in the hope that it may please God to assist me in the course I shall try to follow, that is, not in the least to swerve from the fidelity I owe to my charge, and from the obedience due to authorities, in accordance with the rules of the Gospel and the Church."

On the 2nd of April, 1664, the long expected declaration of the king in parliament made its appearance. It threatened, with great severity, those persons who refused to conform to the will of the king in this affair. All ecclesiastics who failed to sign the formulary were to be deprived of their livings and disqualified from ever after performing any ministerial duties. It was easy to foresee what troubles would ensue when this instrument was put into execution. M. d'Alet prayed night and day with his clergy for the Divine guidance in this crisis. He resolved to write again to the king, and to represent to him the evils which would attend the carrying out of the declaration. He wrote a long letter, and, to give it more weight, he endeavoured to engage several other bishops to sign it; they considered it too hazardous a proceeding and refused, whereupon our prelate despatched the letter as it was.

The king received it in good part; its tone of candour and piety, and the respectful terms in which it was expressed pleased him, notwithstanding its strong opposition to his declaration. Unfortunately Louis XIV., though he has been described as not naturally captious and unreasonab

if left to himself, was very susceptible to impressions from those around him, especially upon subjects he understood very little about, and this was one of them. His feeling towards our prelate altered sadly for the worse after this letter had been commented upon by his Jesuitical advisers.

In the declaration of the king, the clergy were bidden to sign the formulary before the magistrates. This was a blow to Church discipline which our prelate felt keenly, and against which he had protested in his letter to the king. He now took vigorous measures to protect his diocese from this invasion of the Church's authority. He issued an episcopal mandate prohibiting any of his clergy from observing this injunction under pain of excommunication (*ipso facto*). Some of the clergy, either out of opposition to their diocesan or for fear of losing their benefices, were on the point of complying with the order of the king when this mandate stopped them. They knew by experience that the warnings of M. d'Alet were serious ; nevertheless, it did not prevent two ecclesiastics who belonged to the party in league against him from disobeying. The consequence was that they were regarded and treated throughout the whole of the diocese as excommunicate. Their proceeding aroused the indignation of the public, and they found it so unendurable that it was not long before they came to M. d'Alet and expressed their sorrow for their offence, and their willingness to atone for it by any penance he might impose. He pardoned them on condition that they made a written retraction of their signatures, made contrary to the obedience they owed to the Church ; that they abstained for two months from celebrating the Holy Eucharist, and to substitute for this duty the daily recitation of the seven penitential psalms ; to leave their places in the choir, and enter the pulpit during the recitation of the office for a period of eight days ; to fast every

Wednesday for six months; and to pay to the sacristan of the chapter a sum of twenty-five livres; lastly, to attend lectures on piety, and shew to their brethren on all occasions a sincere repentance for their faults. On this firmness and determination on the part of our prelate the whole country were in astonishment; in no other diocese in France were such bold measures adopted. It was a matter of daily occurrence for the clergy to appear before the magistrates to sign the formulary in obedience to the order of the Court. Even the Bishops of Angers and Beauvais, who both disapproved of that document as thoroughly as M. d'Alet himself, offered no opposition to such proceedings. It was the common opinion that our prelate ran no small risk in offering such firm opposition to so absolute a monarch as Louis XIV. To receive no assistance in such a course from any of his brethren in the episcopate, to be surrounded by a multitude of enemies plotting his ruin, to have incurred the hostility of the Court of Rome, and, above all, to have for his chief adversaries the influential party of the Jesuits, was more than sufficient to have overwhelmed any individual who was not (like the Bishop of Alet) visibly supported by the Divine protection. Our good prelate was far from being insensible to the dangers which threatened him, but he was not troubled by it. He calmly awaited the worst that could happen, and sought no other consolation than the satisfaction of being faithful to his duty.

It had been intimated to the king that, in accordance with the terms of the Bishop of Alet's mandate, his majesty had incurred excommunication, and that it was the evident intention of M. d'Alet to insinuate this to make him odious in the eyes of the public. This greatly irritated the king, already sufficiently annoyed at the publication of the letter which had found its way into print, and, by the royal command, an action was commenced against our prelate in the

Parliament of Paris for this alleged insult to the Crown. The advocate-general had received secret orders not to be sparing of his terms, and the result was that a more scandalous attack upon the episcopate was probably never before attempted. Both bishops and parliament were indignant, and had it not been out of respect to the king the application would have been rejected with disdain. After a long delay, an unwilling acquiescence was at length accorded for the suppression of the letter.

No attempt had yet been made to remove the objection of those individuals who refused to sign the formulary on the ground that the assembly of clergy, which had decreed its signature, was an irregular and uncanonical proceeding. But the Crown was now determined to bring matters to an issue, and applied to the Pope to remove this difficulty, which he did by a bull that was received in Paris in March, 1665.

In spite of much persecution, the Religieuses of Port Royal had firmly opposed every attempt to force upon them the signature of the formulary. The Archbishop of Paris had gone so far as to deprive them of the Sacraments of the Church to enforce obedience ; but even this severe measure they bore rather than wound their consciences. It was currently believed that the members of this celebrated society of the Port Royalists were the secret instigators of M. d'Alet, and that the course he took was the result of their advice ; but this was so far from being the case, that the only intercourse, which up to this time had taken place between them, consisted of two letters, which the Bishop of Alet had received and answered, and which have been previously alluded to in this narrative. Subsequently, however, when our prelate had become aware of the sincerity of these celebrated individuals, the purity of their lives and doctrine, the wisdom of their conduct, their high character and literary

attainments, and, above all, their love of truth, in the defence of which they exposed themselves to ignominy and sacrificed all they held most dear, a much closer intercourse took place between them. He consulted them frequently upon the obscure and difficult points of theology that were made the subjects of so much discussion. Especially, he consulted them upon the new bull of the Pope, which gave him much anxiety, for he knew what a considerable number of bishops were waiting to see what course he would take in order to follow it, and he feared greatly lest he should lead them astray. The Port Royalists were divided in opinion on the subject of this Papal decree; some advised open resistance, others thought that under the existing state of matters, an episcopal mandate, complying as far as possible with the terms of the bull, would be more expedient. M. d'Alet adopted the latter course, and his mandate, which he had long previously drawn up and had well considered, was published on the 1st June, 1665. When the news of this proceeding reached Paris, an individual, who possessed a copy, put it immediately into the hands of a printer; the demand was enormous, three editions were exhausted in a few days. "The effect is marvellous," wrote a Doctor of the Sorbonne to a friend, "all good people, whatever party they belong to, approve of it." The Jesuits were exceedingly annoyed at the popular applause which this document had elicited, and made every effort to obtain its suppression. They knew that if it were adopted by the majority of the prelates, all their designs would be frustrated. Three other bishops had already followed in the same course; these were M. Arnauld, Bishop of Angers, M. Buzenval, Bishop of Beauvais, and M. Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers. To obtain the suppression of the mandates of these four bishops who stood bravely together, and to obtain from the Pope a condemnation of their acts, was now their endeavour, and to

this object the Pope's nuncio in Paris gave his assistance. The Perè Annat, confessor to the king, made use of the opportunities which his office gave him to excite the king's zeal in the same direction, and with success.

The tranquillity of M. d'Alet during all this excitement not a little disconcerted his enemies, and even his friends were provoked by it. They felt somewhat annoyed that the chief personage in this great contest should be so calm and inactive, when all beside were so anxiously occupied in it. But now matters seemed to be approaching a crisis, and our good prelate prepared himself for the worst. Never was he more courageous than on those occasions when all human resources seemed taken away. When informed that it was his majesty's intention to send him and the three other bishops into exile, he replied, "that nothing but force should separate him from his diocese; that it was the duty of a bishop to suffer violence rather than leave his charge; and that if he were violently removed, nothing except being placed in confinement should prevent him taking the very first opportunity of returning."

One serious difficulty stood in the way of those decisive measures which the Court was now anxious to take. If the settlement of this dispute were left entirely in the Pope's hands, it was felt by many that the liberties of the Gallican Church would be exposed to great danger, and it was easy to see that the Court of Rome was quite ready to profit by the occasion to destroy those liberties, which up to that time the Gallican Church had preserved inviolate, and to subject her to the yoke of that absolute domination which the Papal See had acquired over many other Christian Churches. To avoid this danger, expedients of all kinds were discussed, and every day brought out some new project. Our good prelate's mandate was like a rock, against which the angry waters of strife dashed themselves in vain.

In replying to one of the schemes which had been submitted to him, he added that he would listen to no terms of peace which did not include *all* persons who were united in maintaining the truth. He knew that it was the intention of the Court to conciliate the four bishops, and to exempt those theologians who had incurred its displeasure by their active opposition to the formulary, including, also, the Religieuses of Port Royal, who, for their passive opposition to it, had been kept for two years in rigorous confinement by the Archbishop of Paris. Our good prelate felt himself united with these sufferers in one common cause, and rejected all terms of accommodation in which they were not included.

Early in the year 1667, an ambassador was at length despatched to the Court of Rome to demand a bull which should give an authority to twelve bishops, named by the Crown, to dispose finally of this affair. The Pope knew that if the decision was left with him one bishop would be enough to execute his decree; but, to meet the king's wishes, he would consent to three bishops to act simply as executors, but not as judges. This reply displeased the Court of France; many of the French bishops also took alarm, and memorialized the king upon the danger which the proposed scheme threatened to the liberties of the national Church. At this juncture, Pope Alexander VII. became seriously ill, and the Jesuits, in great fear lest this affair should fall into the hands of a less zealous successor, made great exertions to obtain the papal signature to two briefs which enjoined the four bishops to sign the formulary within a period of thirty days, without any reservation, under penalty of suspension and interdict if they failed to do so; and nine bishops were named to whom the papal authority was committed to carry out this injunction. All seemed now accomplished, and the dominant party felt the success

of their schemes certain ; but they were doomed to disappointment. The Pope died three weeks after he had signed the brief, and, as they had not been put into force previous to his decease, they became void. Alexander VII. was succeeded in the pontificate by Cardinal Rospigliosi, who took the title of Clement IX. He had the reputation of being mild, affable, and sincere, and withal, a man of business. His elevation to the papal chair greatly revived the courage of the lovers of peace, and it was by the exertions of this Pope that peace was for a time restored to the Church of France. Nineteen bishops addressed him in a letter, which they all signed, defending the cause of their four brethren, whose eminent virtues, they said, (admitted even by their enemies,) were the ornaments of their order. The Jesuits, on the other hand, were not idle ; they endeavoured, by misrepresentations, to prejudice the king more and more against M. d'Alet ; but in the midst of all these trials our good prelate found abundant consolation in his pastoral labours and in the blessings which attended them. At no period of his ministry was there a greater thirst among his people for the Word of God ; never had the spirit of true religion been more manifest, or ecclesiastical discipline better observed through the whole of the diocese, than at this time. Even those members of his clergy who had signed the formulary in opposition to his injunctions repented having done so, confessed their faults, and retracted their signatures. For two years the Dean of St. Paul and a number of the Canons and Prebends of that important chapter had been deprived of the Sacraments for this fault. Grieved at their obstinacy, and at the scandal it created, M. d'Alet made a private visit to each of them ; he reasoned with them and expostulated, but with such gentleness, that the most resolute were softened, and shortly afterwards the dean, accompanied by his chapter, came to him in a body,

acknowledged their fault, and received his absolution. The submission of this numerous chapter at a time when its members could have relied upon the full protection of the Court, and when, too, the deposition of their bishop was a matter of general expectation, was regarded as little short of a miracle.

The arbitrary measures with which the four bishops were threatened appearing to them a very unjust attack, not upon themselves alone, but upon the episcopate, they drew up a circular letter, a copy of which they sent to all the bishops in the kingdom. This letter was received with general satisfaction; many of the bishops replied to it in terms of approval, all of whom declared against the infallibility of the Church on matters of fact. These replies were received by our prelate and placed by him with some other papers which were accidentally left upon his table during his absence on a visit. They were seen by a prebend of the cathedral, who, in the hope of a handsome reward, sent an account of them to the Jesuit confessor of the king. Instant measures were taken by the Crown; the proceeding of the four bishops was declared irregular; their letter was suppressed; and it was prohibited for any archbishop or bishop to publish any circular letter on general subjects in future without first obtaining the permission of the king. The effect of this measure was to excite the zeal of the bishops tenfold; they felt indignant at the injustice of it, and those who had not replied to the letter of the four bishops now did so in much stronger terms of commendation than their brethren who had already written.

The time had now come for another effort to bring both parties to an agreement. The letter of the nineteen French bishops had alarmed the Pope. The king was wearied out. Again was M. d'Alet urgently pressed to make a journey to Paris and undertake the defence of the cause. Several

bishops besought him to overcome his repugnance to leave his diocese. After much reflection he determined to remain at home, and gave the following reasons:—1. That the king would listen much more favourably to those prelates who had undertaken to be mediators in this affair than to himself, who was an interested party, and one in whom the king had lost confidence. 2. That on a former occasion the Court had requested him not to leave his diocese, upon a report getting abroad that he was about to do so on this very matter, and that if he set out on this occasion he quite expected to receive an order to return, which would give an advantage to their adversaries and prejudice the good cause. 3. That there were many concealed enemies to religion in his diocese, who would be certain to take advantage of his absence to do mischief. 4. That if the Court was determined to condemn the four bishops, it would be better for them to remain at home, than be found in the place where their condemnation was pronounced, which would give occasion for their adversaries to say that they had been heard before being sentenced. Such was the counsel given by St. Bernard to bishops in his time who were cited to Rome, where the influence of their enemies was all-powerful. Lastly, he considered that he ought not to leave his diocese except by an express order from the king. "In such a case," said he, "it would be my duty to sacrifice even the private interests of my diocese for the general interest of the Church, to which I should then have reason to believe that it was the Divine will that I should apply myself." He concluded by saying that there were many other private reasons, personal to himself, why he should not undertake the journey his friends so pressed him to do. To an intimate friend he afterwards mentioned these latter reasons. "Do they think *me*," said he, "a fit person to plead an affair of this importance before a great monarch? Would it be proper for

a man, destitute of talent, and knowing as I do so little of the world's ways, and scarcely anything at all of the Court, to appear before the great as the advocate of such a cause? What a figure should I appear! I should be overwhelmed with confusion; but though I would submit to this, and the contempt my appearance would excite, still the truth would suffer for it, because I should defend it so poorly; and the sense which God has given me of my incapacity would be my condemnation if I had the hardihood to accept such a commission." Thus, in real humility, did this holy prelate conceal from himself those great gifts both of nature and grace which it had pleased God so richly to bestow upon him, and which it was impossible to conceal from those who knew him. And, as the truly humble soul never desires to appear humble though it does desire to appear vile in the eyes of others,* M. d'Alet suppressed in his letter, which was to be shewn to many friends, this avowal of his insufficiency, which would have drawn upon him the reputation of humility. But the prelates who were now labouring to bring this affair to a conclusion knew well that there was no one in the whole kingdom so capable as M. d'Alet of negotiating it with success. "Matters have arrived at a crisis," wrote the Bishop of Comminges to a friend, "and if this opportunity is allowed to escape all will be lost. No one can resist such a man as the Bishop of Alet. There is not a single circumstance relating to this affair that he is not fully acquainted with; he has a quickness of apprehension and readiness of mind which nothing can escape; and a *sang froid* and determination which nothing can intimidate. He is always the same; and, with all his simplicity and straightforwordness, it is impossible to deceive him; he goes straight to the point, and has the faculty of leading

* *Verus humilis vilis vult haberi, non humilis prædicari.*—*S. Bernard.*

others to it who are deviating, however subtle-minded they may be ; besides which, his grave and majestic countenance enforces respect. The king would be attracted by his candour and plain dealing, and would be touched by the force of his eloquence, and impressed by the sanctity which silently influences all who see and hear him."

It was not long, however, before it became evident to all that M. d'Alet was right in remaining at home. The Court were secretly opposed to his appearing at Paris. The king had been apprised by one of his ministers what would be the effect of such a journey. "If your majesty," said M. Tellier, "commands the presence of the Bishop of Alet at Court, he will certainly not come unattended, the chief personages of Alet and the neighbouring dioceses, where he is regarded as a saint, will assuredly accompany him. Wherever he passes, crowds will assemble to beg his blessing. No sooner will he have arrived at Orleans than all Paris will be there to receive him, all vying with one another to offer him their services. His arrival in Paris will be a triumph. How any one, under such circumstances, could seriously think of commencing a legal action against a bishop so canonized by the people, and so universally respected by all good men, is hardly to be conceived. Who will dare to be his accuser? Who would presume to be his judge?" The king, who felt the force of these reasons, gave up all idea of allowing M. d'Alet to appear in Paris, and desired, more than ever, to be relieved of this embarrassing business by means of some reasonable accommodation. To obtain this much desired object, the Archbishop of Sens and the Bishop of Chalons, at the wish of the king, now bent all their energies. It was proposed that a letter should be addressed to the Pope, signed by the four bishops, expressing their willingness to sign the formulary "sincerely" instead of "purely and simply" which they had so long steadily refused to do. This term "sincerely"

would allow the belief that, though the five propositions were condemned, they might not have been extracted from Jansenius. M. Arnauld undertook the drawing up of this letter, which he pledged his word would meet the approval of M. d'Alet, and was assisted by the celebrated M. Nicole, both of whom were at that time living in concealment at the house of the Duchess de Longueville at Port Royal des Champs. This letter was read to the king, who was satisfied with it, and requested that the matter might be kept secret. After a few alterations made in it by the nuncio, who guaranteed the Pope's acceptance of it, it was forwarded to M. d'Alet for his signature and that of his three friends. Our good bishop received the letter with some suspicion; he believed it to be the snare which he always expected would sooner or later be presented to him. The letter was ambiguous; it did not clearly express the matter in dispute. "We ought," said he, "to speak with candour, and, if out of respect for the holy father we avoid those expressions which would be displeasing to him, our love for the Truth should prevent us using those which would obscure it. The Pope knows that we are determined to remain firm in the doctrine of our mandates, and this should be clearly expressed in the letter to prevent mistake." The difficulty had been in framing this letter to avoid offending either party, and for this purpose it was necessary that the doctrine in dispute should neither be assailed nor defended. There was no time to be lost; the Jesuits were urgent that the nine bishops should begin their sittings, and then all hope of a settlement was gone. M. d'Alet, however, hesitated; he feared that the finger of God was not in this arrangement; the manner of proceeding partook so much of mere human wisdom. He wished for a time to pray over it. Yielding in some measure to the entreaties of his most intimate friends, M. d'Alet consented at last to make but two

alterations in the letter, the effect of which was to prevent the supposition that any prejudice was offered to the mandates of the four bishops in which the truth they clung to had been clearly expressed. He stipulated, also, for two things, namely, that he should be at liberty to publish to the world the proceedings of his synod which he should assemble for the signature of the formulary in the manner now agreed upon, in case he should be hereafter misrepresented; also that the course now agreed to should be ratified by a declaration from the Crown. Both these stipulations were acceded to; the Ministers of the Crown pledging themselves to issue a decree which should amply satisfy M. d'Alet. It was impossible, however, to admit of any alterations in the letter. The Archbishop of Sens, the chief negotiator in this business, had pledged his word to the nuncio that it would be accepted. The nuncio had already communicated with the Pope on the subject, and the archbishop therefore implored M. d'Alet to sign it as it stood. "If" said he, "we are so unfortunate as not to obtain this, you will see me at your feet a short time after we shall have received this sad news." M. d'Alet bitterly complained of the way he had been treated,—“Why not have left it to him to have drawn up such a letter as he *could* sign, and why have pledged him to a course without his knowledge.” He shut himself up in his closet to pray. The Bishop of Pamiers, afflicted at the resistance of his friend, made every effort to prevail on him to accept the letter against which he thought no just exception could be taken. The two other bishops of Beauvais and Angers were of the same mind; they thought the difficulties slight compared with the advantages to be gained by a peaceful settlement of this long controversy. This decided our prelate; he was not willing that a peace so ardently desired should be frustrated by his single opposition; he signed the letter on

the 18th September, 1668, and convoked his synod the following week for the signature of the formulary.

When this letter to the Pope, signed by the four bishops, arrived in Paris, great was the joy of all who were in the secret. The king was very much gratified. The joy of the Pope's nuncio knew no bounds. At his request the king dismissed the nine bishops who had been named to sit in judgment on their four brethren. They obeyed immediately, glad to be relieved from a task which would have exposed them to the raillery of the public.

On the 18th September, 1668, M. d'Alet convoked a general synod of his diocese, and after all had partaken of the Holy Communion he addressed the assembled clergy on the subject of the new signature. He concluded his address by explaining clearly its meaning and intention. "It obliges you," said he, "in the first place to condemn sincerely, plainly, and without reservation all the evil sense which the Pope and the Church have condemned and do condemn in the five propositions, and to profess that you hold no other doctrine than that of the Catholic Church on this subject. Secondly,—We declare to you that it would be injurious to the Church to include in the senses condemned the doctrine of St. Augustine and St. Thomas on the subject of effectual grace necessary to every action of Christian piety, which all persons agree has never been questioned by the Popes, as they themselves have frequently declared. We declare, thirdly,—That with regard to the *fact* spoken of in the said formulary, the signature commits you only to a submission of respect and discipline which consists, in maintaining silence respecting it; so as to preserve that order, which in matters of this kind should regulate the conduct of inferiors to their ecclesiastical superiors; because the Church, being not infallible on facts which regard the sense of authors or their works, does not oblige

her children by the single authority of her decision to believe them." These explanations and instructions having been drawn up in a process verbal, M. d'Alet affixed his signature to the document, and all the clergy present followed his example.

So ended this long protracted controversy, as far as the subject of this memoir is concerned, and great was the joy of all good people, who had for years been grieved to see our bishop, whom they regarded as the strongest column in the Church of France, on the verge of being overthrown. The Jesuits, from whom this effort at pacification had been kept secret, used all their efforts to stifle it in its birth. They were very much enraged. "Your weakness," said the king's confessor to the Pope's nuncio, "has ruined, in a single quarter of an hour, the work of twenty years." The frightened nuncio, who feared the resentment of the society, endeavoured to undo the work which was still not quite finished. There wanted yet the Pope's brief and the royal declaration to confirm it. The adversaries of the pacification succeeded in spoiling the one and preventing the other. The brief arrived on the 13th of October. It contained a falsity, and had it been made public the controversy would have at once been resumed. It was kept secret. The declaration of the king never appeared at all. A decree of council was, however, issued, drawn up to please both sides, and which satisfied neither, but the effects were for the moment good. Peace was proclaimed; the prescribed theologians of Port Royal issued from their hiding places where they had concealed themselves to escape persecution; M. Arnauld was presented to the king, who received him graciously. The whole Court gave this eminent writer and controversialist the most flattering marks of its esteem and consideration for his character, and the Pope's nuncio loaded him with compliments. The exiled canons of Beauvais were

reinstated ; M. de Saci was liberated from the Bastile ; and the king wrote a complimentary letter to the four bishops assuring them of his good will and esteem for their virtues. The face of the Church in France appeared to have undergone a happy alteration ; the clouds dispersed, and there was sunshine. But this pleasant change was but momentary ; the clouds again gathered, and the gloom was even deeper than before. The Peace of Clement IX., as it was termed, was no sooner concluded than it was broken by the intrigues of that powerful party who were its avowed enemies. The event proved how well grounded were the fears of our good bishop that he would be deceived in this affair. He never after spoke of it, and it was a subject of grief to him for the rest of his days.

CHAPTER XXVI.

M. d'Alet sends the MSS. of his Ritual to M. Arnauld for revision—its publication in Paris in 1667—success—hostility of the Jesuits—they procure the Papal condemnation—republication of the Ritual with the written approval of twenty-nine French bishops—death of Clement IX.—great demand for the Ritual—numerous editions are printed.



THE zeal with which M. d'Alet had applied himself to the instruction of the clergy of his diocese, and of the clerical students in his seminary, in the doctrines of the Christian faith and the discipline of the Church, have already been alluded to in an earlier part of this memoir. After labouring at this task for nearly thirty years, he felt a strong desire to compile these instructions, which had quite changed the aspect of his diocese, in the form of a volume for the use of future generations. But the pressure of his many episcopal duties leaving him but little time for such an undertaking, he forwarded, in the year 1665, all the materials he had accumulated for this work to his vicar-general, who was at that time in Paris, charging him to place them in the hands of M. de Barcos, Abbé de St. Cyran, an ecclesiastic of great repute for his extensive knowledge in canon law and in all matters connected with Church discipline. M. d'Alet at the same time wrote to him a letter praying him to arrange the whole in the best order, with the co-operation of M. Arnauld, and to reject all matter that he might consider not strictly conformed to the spirit of the Church and to those holy rules

which the Fathers have transmitted from their times. In pursuance of this request, M. de Barcos faithfully performed this duty, and when he had completed the work M. Arnauld revised it. Both were equally delighted with the wisdom and unction of these excellent rules and instructions, and, in arranging them in a form they thought most suitable, they did not venture to make any alteration in the matter, which they regarded as the precious fruits of the long meditations of our prelate, and of his abundant communications with the Author of every good and perfect gift. They sent back the work, accompanied with a few remarks which they submitted to his judgment, also with some observations of their friends to whom they had shewn it. M. d'Alet gladly availed himself of the communications of these great masters to put the concluding touches to his work. It was published in Paris in 1667, under the title of "The Ritual of the Bishop of Alet." For clear statements of doctrine and sound Christian instruction it was unapproached by any work of the kind that had previously appeared. It was eagerly purchased. The bishops of France and of foreign countries were much gratified that a practical work of this nature, such as had long been needed, had at last been published. Several prelates proposed to adopt it in their dioceses, and to conform their use to its rule. Many of them wrote thankful letters of acknowledgment to its author, testifying their high appreciation of its merits, which they regarded as the fruit of his long experience in the ministry and in the guidance of souls, which would be invaluable alike to prelates in the government of their dioceses, to the clergy who worked under their directions, that they might know how to acquit themselves worthily of their high functions, and for the faithful generally, to instruct them in the essence of religion and the due preparation for receiving worthily the holy mysteries.

The greater the praise elicited by this work of our prelate, the greater was the jealousy of his enemies excited by it. And there was another cause that greatly increased this hostility. In addition to the pure and ancient doctrines of the Christian faith which the work set forth, it contained also a condemnation of those pernicious relaxations of Christian morality which were taught by the "New Casuists." This was sufficient in itself to arouse the animosity of the party who for several years had undertaken the defence of this teaching, and who had succeeded in obtaining a strong opposition at Rome, under the Pontificate of Alexander VII., to the censure of those doctrines which had been pronounced by the Faculty of Theology at Paris. The effect of this hostility soon shewed itself in the appearance of a papal brief, which was pronounced by competent judges to be the most scandalous in principle, the most irregular in form, and the most injurious to the Episcopate that had issued from the Court of Rome for many years. It condemned, in general terms, the Ritual of the Bishop of Alet, as containing false and dangerous doctrines: it excommunicated, *ipso facto*, all persons who read or kept it: it condemned the work to be burnt by the common hangman, and all copies that could be discovered were to be brought to the chief civil authority to be so dealt with. The appearance of such a brief caused the greater surprise to the friends of our prelate, as the accession of Clement IX. to the Pontificate had given rise to great hopes of better things. He had the reputation of being an amiable and judicious man, and zealous for the welfare of the Church; but this and some of the subsequent acts of this Pontiff afford a striking evidence how generally the interests of the Court of Rome prevail over the true interests of the Church, and that however pious may be the individual who presides over the See of Rome, and however

great may be his love for truth and justice, it is a difficult matter to resist the current of opinions that prevail around him, and which often leads him to sacrifice his better judgment to political considerations.

The two mediators of the peace, the Archbishop of Sens and the Bishop of Chalons, were engaged in their difficult task when this brief made its appearance, and they saw in it a fatal obstacle to their work. Fortunately, however, it could not be published without the king's authority. To prevent this, they represented to the Ministers of the Crown the irregularity of the document, and its injurious character both to the episcopal order generally and the Church of France in particular, and shewed how greatly the Pope had in this instance abused his power; that so far from that power being absolute, he was, they said, himself accountable to the episcopal body, and that his position gave him no immunity from the gospel rule (Matt. xviii. 17) not to condemn a brother without first having told him of his fault; that M. d'Alet had composed his Ritual in virtue of that authority to teach, which by Divine right is attached to the episcopal office, and the obligation he had laid upon his clergy to use it was an act of that jurisdiction which he held from Jesus Christ; that to condemn the book, and to prohibit its use in a manner so uncanonical, without due examination, and without giving its author a hearing, was tacitly to deny those powers which by the Great Head of the Church had been conferred upon the successors of the Apostles. The very absence, they remarked, of any special mention in the brief of particular error in the book was a proof that nothing had been found in it that could not be maintained, and the object had been to bring discredit and humiliation upon a holy bishop; for what could be more scandalous, said they, than to condemn a book to be burnt, so full of holy rules for the due administration of the Sacraments, and

of the preparation of heart for the right reception of them, and of practical directions for leading a Christian life. There were many reprehensible practices prevalent in the Church which were condemned in the Ritual, such as the shameful traffic in dispensations, given, without legitimate cause, for money payment, the conferment of holy orders, and bestowal of benefices upon persons destitute of any true vocation, the sale of benefices, &c. Who will not suspect, said they, that it is for speaking out zealously against these abuses which dishonour the Church, that the work of a holy bishop has been condemned to the flames? What bishop will henceforth be free from censure, who labours, as his duty obliges him to do, to bring back that holy discipline which has been in a great measure lost, and of which the little that remains is diminishing day by day? Having made a very strong impression on the ministers, the two prelates sought the papal nuncio; they convinced him of the impolicy of publishing a brief which would not only oppose an insurmountable obstacle to the attainment of peace in the Church, but would arouse the opposition of the greater number of French prelates who would certainly join together for the defence of the liberties of their Church which the brief had attacked. The nuncio promised that the brief should not be published.

Greatly were the Jesuits disappointed at the ill success of their schemes, and this feeling was not a little increased by the following circumstance. A new translation of the Holy Scriptures had been undertaken by M. de Saci, assisted by some other members of the Port Royal school. The solitary years of his imprisonment in the Bastille had been employed by this holy man in these useful labours, which, very singularly, were completed on the very day of his liberation from prison. The extraordinary merit of this work has since obtained for it the reputation of being the best translation

of the Bible extant in any language, our own not excepted. It was subsequently published in thirty-two volumes, accompanied with the Latin vulgate in opposite columns, and interspersed with a commentary derived chiefly from the writings of the early Fathers. It appeared in print about the same time as the Ritual of our prelate, and provoked from the Jesuits an equal degree of animosity. They obtained from Rome a brief for its condemnation, in like manner as for the Ritual; but this valuable work had a friend at Court in the person of the Procureur-Général, and upon his remonstrance this brief was suppressed by the order of the king, at the same time that the other against the Ritual was withheld by the nuncio.

Deeply chagrined at this misfortune, the Jesuits determined to prejudice our prelate as much as possible, and having obtained a copy of the brief in question, they caused it to be printed in Latin and French and disseminated throughout the kingdom, but more especially in the diocese of Alet. It did a great deal of mischief, and created a kind of schism in the collegiate church of S. Paul. Some of its canons separated from those of their brethren, who continued to use the Ritual. Many persons, afraid to act contrary to the order from Rome, knew not what to do and began to distrust the doctrines which had been taught in the diocese for nearly thirty years, and of which the Ritual was a summary. M. d'Alet was deeply grieved. It seemed as if he was on the brink of losing the fruit of thirty years of arduous labour, through the pains which the enemy was taking to choke the good seed which he had sown and cultivated with so much care. Nor was he less afflicted at the outrage which in his person had been offered to the episcopate and to the liberties of the Church of France. It gave him some comfort, however, to know how many of the French bishops felt the wound that had been inflicted, and were desirous of

taking measures to remedy it. The negotiations for a general peace in the Church were at this time going on, and M. d'Alet was unwilling to place any additional difficulties in its way by vindicating his Ritual until that object was attained. For a whole year, therefore, he quietly tolerated an evil which he could not remedy without prejudicing this work of pacification. He contented himself by taking counsel with his friends as to the best plan to adopt when the time arrived, and that which was thought the best and most canonical was to publish an approval of the Ritual with the signatures of as many French bishops as could be obtained. On the conclusion of the peace no time was lost in carrying out this plan. No secret was made of it, and the consequence was that a report of what was in progress soon reached the Courts of France and Rome. The Crown ministers, without objecting to the scheme, suggested, nevertheless, that a better way would have been to have published a new edition of the Ritual, in which the expressions that had caused most offence should be softened down. The Bishop of Comminges, afraid of prejudicing the new-made peace, strongly urged our prelate to adopt this course. M. d'Alet was alarmed; the reasons which his friends gave were plausible, and, although he had great confidence in the wisdom and good faith of many eminent men who also counselled a revision of the work, yet his great love for the Truth, for pure and sound Christian doctrine, and for the maintenance of Church discipline, led him to regard with fear any proposal to weaken the clear exposition which he had made of these matters in his Ritual. He feared, too, that such changes would give cause for many persons to suppose that the censure of Rome was just, and that the principles he had followed out in the management of his diocese were innovations, and contrary to the customs of the Church, as the brief stated. He thought, too, that the anxiety to pre-

serve a peace which had procured rest and enlargement to many persons of merit, had induced his friends to suggest a compromise in this affair. "Also," said he, "will you not discover in the best works something to find fault with, when you proceed to criticize minutely forms of expression, the real value of which is better determined by their general sense and natural equity than by scholastic rules." Much correspondence passed on this subject, in which it appeared very plainly how much our prelate was opposed to make the slightest alteration in the work in question. He was hard pressed. "To prevent any misunderstanding," wrote his friend, the Bishop of Comminges, "can you not write a short preface to the effect, that although there is nothing in the first edition contrary to the spirit of the Church, nevertheless, for the sake of greater clearness, you have thought it well to alter some expressions, but that the principles advocated therein are untouched, and that your clergy are at liberty to make use of either edition they please."

Matters had arrived at this state, when it reached the ears of Pope Clement IX. how lightly his brief was regarded in France, and that a new edition of the Ritual was about to appear, accompanied by the approbation of a great number of bishops. He wrote to the king beseeching him to spare him this affront and to stop the publication "which," said he, "will fill up the measure of my grief." The king, who had a sincere friendship for the Pope, and knowing how much pain this affair caused him, gave orders to his minister to dissuade M. d'Alet from his purpose, or to prevail upon him at least to defer the publication for the present. It was too late. The work was already in the press and the publisher had hastened its completion without giving himself any trouble about the alterations which were under discussion. No instructions apparently having been received by him to stop the publication, it was reprinted and issued, the

only effect of the king's order having been to decide M. d'Alet, after consulting with several of his brother bishops and friends, to defend the Ritual and its doctrines against all the world, regardless of any considerations, human or political, into which many of his friends wished to draw him. He believed it to be his indispensable duty to defend the rights of his office and of the episcopate, and that this obligation ought to release him from any fear of troubling the recent pacification in the Church.

"It is my duty," said he, in writing to the minister of the Crown. "to defend my work, and also the episcopal authority which has been so grievously attacked and wounded in this affair. Neither prohibitions, nor menaces, in a word, nothing shall stop me in the performance of this duty. If I have waited a whole year before complaining of this outrage, it is only because the two prelates, the Archbishop of Sens and the Bishop of Chalons, while negotiating the peace, assured me that the Pope's nuncio had pledged his word to them that satisfaction should be given when this business was concluded. Upon this assurance, I forbore writing to the King and the Pope, and also to issue the pastoral letter that I had drawn up in defence of the doctrines of the Church, and especially as I learnt that a number of bishops had resolved to join in this defence by approving the Ritual against the censure of Rome. Had it not been for these considerations, it would have been impossible to have suffered so atrocious an injury to the Church to have remained so long unredressed; and, as regards my own case, that injury has been greatly augmented, not only in the dissemination of this brief throughout the diocese of Alet, but still more in the burning of the Ritual by the common hangman in the market-place of Avignon. The wound which this censure has given to the episcopal order reduces it to the most shameful servitude and throws it into the most

abject abasement, so much so that I fear that God will bring me to account for my long silence with regard to it." "There are but two ways," said M. d'Alet, in conclusion, "to redress these great wrongs. The one is, that the Pope should declare that, having been wrongly informed concerning the doctrine of the Ritual, he revokes the censures; the other is, to publish the approbation of twenty-nine bishops and my pastoral letter. Having no hope whatever of the former, my course is taken,—to adopt the latter, which I have now in hand."

"It is quite useless to remonstrate with such a bishop as this," said the minister, when he had read the letter, "I must confess that a great injustice has been done to him, and he has reason to complain; well,—he must do as he thinks proper."

M. d'Alet kept his word. He had prepared a long and ably written defence of the Church and of his Ritual, which he published under the form of a pastoral letter, accompanied by the signatures of twenty-nine French bishops.

The death of Clement IX., which took place a few months afterwards, terminated this affair. The brief became a dead letter, while numerous editions of the Ritual followed one after another both in France and in foreign countries. It so happened that in consequence of the attempt of Rome to crush this excellent work, multitudes of people became aware of its existence who would otherwise have never probably seen it, and the light of Truth was thus diffused throughout the kingdom with far greater success than if the attempt to extinguish it had never been made.

1763, 1764.

1765, 1766.

1767, 1768.

1769, 1770.

1771, 1772.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The affair of the Regale—some provinces in France exempt from this law—M. d'Alet determines to uphold the ancient liberties of his Church—serious illness—M. Hamon, the physician of Port Royal, visits Alet—the last Sacraments administered—touching scene—M. d'Alet recovers—brief account of M. Hamon—M. d'Alet devotes his renewed strength to defend his Church—publishes an ordinance against the Regale—letter to the King—deprived of his principal clergy, who are ordered into exile by the Government—increased labours—trouble and disorder in the diocese caused by the forcible introduction of the Regale—the King is urged to adopt extreme measures with M. d'Alet—overruled—bitter opposition of the Metropolitan—M. d'Alet seized with an attack of apoplexy—writes for the last time to the Pope and King—Innocent XI. warmly espouses his cause—second seizure—the last Sacraments administered—death of M. d'Alet—funeral obsequies.

IN the affair of the formulary and of the Ritual, we have seen with what uncompromising fidelity the subject of this memoir maintained the doctrines of the Christian faith when assailed by a host of enemies. It will be the object of the present chapter to relate how bravely this great champion of the Church defended her civil liberties as well as the truth of her doctrines.

The term Regale has been applied to express the right* claimed by the kings of France from the earliest times to receive the revenues of bishoprics during the vacancy of the sees, and to present to all benefices dependent on them, with the exception of those which have the charge of souls,

* The reader of Church history will be aware how greatly this right has been abused to the detriment of the Church, and that sees have been kept vacant for years, in order that their revenues might be appropriated to purposes very foreign to the interests of religion.

and to retain this right until the new bishop shall have taken the oath of fidelity to the Sovereign, and registered the same in the Chamber of Accounts in Paris. From time immemorial several of the churches in France have claimed exemption from this law, and especially those of the province of Languedoc. This fact was communicated to M. d'Alet when he left Paris for his diocese, and it was on this account that, after doing homage to Louis XIII. while passing through the city of Lyons, he did not think it right to follow the advice of those who counselled him to register this act in Paris, so as to close the right of Regale, to which he felt persuaded his diocese was not subject. Some time after his arrival there, this question gave him some trouble, on a demand being made upon him for two years' revenues,—that period having transpired between his nomination to the see and his taking possession of it. M. d'Alet opposed this demand, and was preparing to defend the rights of his Church, when the matter dropped, and our prelate was left undisturbed, as far as this question was concerned, until the year 1673,—the thirty-fifth of his episcopate,—when, by a decree of the Crown, ratified by the Parliament of Paris, the law of Regale was declared to extend to all the dioceses in the kingdom without exception. Thereupon it became necessary for our prelate to obtain full information on this subject. It was one that had provoked a good deal of discussion. He read all that had been published on both sides, and came to the conclusion that it was necessary to register his oath of fidelity to the Crown, in obedience to the royal declaration, and was about to do so, when he was informed by a friend that this step was a much more important one than he seemed aware of, and that it would subject his diocese without recovery to this objectionable law, from which it had always been exempt. Upon this, M. d'Alet who was not the man to prejudice the interests of the Church

to relieve himself from trouble, deferred doing anything in this matter until he had well fathomed it. Being unable that year to attend the meeting of the estates of Languedoc, he sent thither one of his clergy to obtain the opinion of the bishops of the province on this important subject. Their opinion was unanimous that it was decidedly an usurpation of the Crown against the ancient liberties of their churches, but that they saw no help for it; to offer resistance to the will of Louis XIV. they considered, would be both fruitless and dangerous. "The weak," said they, "must submit to the strong." M. d'Alet thought differently, but he stood alone. "It is a pity," said one of the Councillors of State, "to witness the meanness and timidity of nearly all the bishops. In this affair of the Regale they seem to consider nothing but their own private interests, and quite disregard those of the Church. I am grieved to see that not a single bishop has the courage to remonstrate." There was one, however, that possessed that courage, and that was the Bishop of Alet. It was a quality he possessed in a high degree, in combination with the truest humility. "To yield to the strongest" was not one of his maxims. The principle of his conduct was to resist, as a wall of brass, the most formidable attacks, from whatever quarter they might proceed, when convinced that to do so was in the path of his duty. His respect for the sovereign was sincere, but it grieved him to see how the authority which Divine Providence had given to that high estate, for the protection of the Church and not to reduce her to servitude, was abused by the flatterers about the Court; and he felt it to be his duty to make every effort to inspire the king with a right understanding on this point, and, if unable to do so, to obey God rather than man. An opportunity soon occurred for taking the first step. The treasurership of the Cathedral of Alet had been conferred in Regale upon a young ecclesiastic of

Toulouse, who, in the absence of our prelate, came to take possession. M. d'Alet returned on the day following, and published an ordinance prohibiting the intruder from interfering with the functions of the treasurer under penalty of excommunication, and the chapter from receiving him under pain of interdict. The *would-be* treasurer departed a few days after to obtain the protection of the Court. The next proceeding of our prelate was to write, on the 8th July, 1675, to the general Assembly of Clergy, which was held annually in Paris, to help him in this affair, but the Archbishop of Paris, who presided, was not disposed to offend the Court, and would not allow the question to be discussed.

In the month of September following, M. d'Alet was attacked by one of those violent colics of which mention has already been made in a previous chapter. He would not, however, intermit the course of those pastoral visits which had been arranged, notwithstanding the continual pain he suffered, but on the third of the ensuing month a malignant fever supervened and laid him quite prostrate. Happily, however, on the first day of his illness the celebrated physician of Port Royal, M. Hamon, arrived at Alet. This event seemed to be a special intervention of God to succour His sick servant. For some time the disease baffled all remedies, and the patient grew weaker and weaker. Believing his end approaching he sent for the archdeacon, the second dignitary in the cathedral, (the dean being absent,) to administer the last Sacraments. The news that their beloved bishop was in extremity spread instantly throughout the town and neighbourhood. The civil authorities came in a body to the episcopal residence followed by crowds of weeping men and women, anxious to see their pastor, whom they loved so dearly, for the last time, and to receive his parting blessing. The chapter of the cathedral followed with the Holy Eucharist, bearing lighted tapers. On enter-

ing the sick chamber the archdeacon pronounced the sentence—"Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." (Matt. xxv. 6.) At these well known words, the good bishop, feeble as he was, raised himself in bed, and fell on his knees in adoration. He requested that he might be interrogated upon the Articles of Faith as though he were the humblest of his flock, and after having made his profession and spoken a few words upon the obligation of all Christians, and especially of pastors to confess with the lips what they believed in the heart, he received the Holy Sacrament. This Divine nourishment appeared to have given him fresh energy, and he turned to address those who were present in the chamber. "You see me," said he, "about to appear before the dread tribunal of Jesus Christ. There you will one day appear also, and I entreat you, for the last time, my dear brethren, to live from this moment as you would wish you had lived when you are in the same state as that in which you now see me. For five-and-thirty years I have carried you in my bosom as a nurse carries her infant, and I have fed you with the milk of the Word of God. By this Word you will be judged. Let it be henceforth the rule of your life." Many persons had entered the chamber, and their sobs and weeping almost drowned the feeble voice of the good bishop. After a pause, he turned to the clergy who had approached the bed,—“For you, my dear brethren and fellow-labourers in the sacred ministry which has been entrusted to me, never deviate from the holy rule we have together followed in the guidance of souls. Let the influence of your example add weight to the instructions we have conjointly given to the faithful. Let your lives and conduct exhibit a pattern of those virtues they ought to practise. Conduct yourselves in all things in a manner worthy of your vocation and of the holiness of your office. Let your love for the Church and for the Truth,

of which she is the guardian, make you insensible to the favours of the world and superior to its menaces. I have laboured with all the strength I have possessed to establish peace and concord among you. This is the true characteristic of the children of God. I have not in these last moments of my life a joy more sweet and pure than to be able to say to you, as our Saviour said to His disciples, 'My peace I leave with you,' and I pray God that He may preserve to you this precious gift without any alteration." The bishop dwelt especially on this last point of peace, and then, being exhausted, he humbly recommended himself to the prayers of all present who, prostrate and in tears, begged his benedictions.

After several days of great suffering the malady gradually abated, and our good prelate by degrees recovered his health. During the period of his convalescence he enjoyed extremely many delightful conversations with his physician, the good Hamon. The following interesting notice of this remarkable man may be found in the select memoirs of Port Royal, vol. 3, page 97. "Amongst the number of these excellent persons Hamon was particularly distinguished by his talents and piety. Hamon might be termed, like St. Luke, at once the evangelist and the physician of the disciples. Well known both in the literary and professional world by his various publications both on subjects of biblical criticism, by his moral and spiritual essays, and by the elegant Latinity and eloquence of the celebrated epitaphs of Port Royal, he only devoted the hours stolen from his repose to literary pursuits. The day was spent in the gratuitous exercise of his profession of physician, in which he had attained the first eminence both in Paris and in the estimation of the Court. His charity was so ardent that he deprived himself of fire, and, comparatively speaking, of food, in order to extend his bounties to the poor. For two-and-twenty years

he subsisted on nothing but the bran bread, made for the dogs of Port Royal, and water, in order that he might have his daily portion of food to distribute among the poor. He every day walked above twenty miles, without having broken his fast, to visit the sick, carrying food and medicine with his own hands; and, that he might not lose a moment, he always carried with him a New Testament, which he had acquired the habit of reading as he walked; so that he was at once a physician to the souls and bodies of his patients." The recluse who has recorded his life concludes by observing—"He entered into eternal life the 22nd of February, 1687, aged 69, occupied in the contemplation of the mercies of our Lord and with his heart and mind fixed on Christ, the mediator between God and man."

On his recovery from this illness, M. d'Alet felt himself more strongly urged than ever to sustain the burden of the affair of the Regale. During his convalescence he had taken the generous resolution to brave all dangers and submit to any sacrifices that might be needed to preserve for his Church its ancient immunities. This resolve was the fruit of the painful ordeal through which he had just passed, and was a thank-offering to God who had restored him to health from the very brink of the grave. "God," said he, "has given me life that I may continue to combat for the integrity of the Church." There was the greater spirit of sacrifice in this determination as our prelate believed that he stood alone in opposing the designs of the Crown in this matter. While he meditated before God upon it, information was brought to him that an ecclesiastic had come to take possession of a priory in his diocese in virtue of this law of Regale. Following the example of the great bishops of the earlier ages of the Church, who never decided any affairs of consequence except in concert with their presbytery, M. d'Alet assembled a council of his clergy to explain to

them fully the nature and bearings of this affair, and to ask them to join in seeking from God, by their prayers and penitential acts, the light and direction so needful to their bishop to act rightly in so delicate a matter. This little assembly met three times, and, on the last occasion, M. d'Alet declared the course he had decided upon. With a countenance serene and composed, indicative of the interior peace within, he told them that the reasons for opposing the declaration of the king were always accompanied in his mind, when he thought of them before God, with sweetness and tranquillity, and they appeared to him so clear that he could scarcely allow himself to dwell even for a moment on the painful consequences that would most probably accompany resistance. On the other hand, the consideration of the reasons for acquiescing in the declaration always produced a sense of trouble and confusion. He added, "The powers of the earth combined are weak, indeed, in opposing the Divine Will. He Who has effected the good which has been accomplished in this diocese, knows how to preserve it, though the world should oppose it. After all, I shall not be responsible for its loss, though I shall be for my zeal or negligence in defending the rights of the Church. They may deprive me of my revenues, but God, Who feedeth the ravens, will take care of our poor. They may lay violent hands upon my person, and ought I not to esteem myself happy to suffer in so just a cause?"

On the 5th of March, 1676, M. d'Alet published an ordinance against the intrusion of any person into any benefice or dignity in virtue of the Regale. The Bishop of Pamiers consulted his friend, as was his custom, on the part which he ought to take in this affair, and after considering the reasons M. d'Alet gave him for resisting the proceedings of the Government against the rights of the ecclesiastical province of Narbonne, he determined to adopt the same

course as our prelate, and it was in his diocese that the chief troubles of the Regale took place. The Archbishop of Narbonne, Metropolitan of Alet, was alarmed at the ordinance of our prelate, and not wishing to run any risk of offending the king threatened to annul it, but being advised that its arguments were good and legal, he chose another way of bringing him to terms. This was to appoint ecclesiastics favourable to the views of the Crown to the benefices of Alet. The king's confessor, Father de la Chaise, was requested to find suitable persons for this purpose, and he performed this duty with great zeal. Upon this, M. d'Alet resolved to lay the matter before the king, and he did so in a letter in which he pleaded the rights of his Church with great force and clearness and at considerable length. The following is an extract from this admirable composition :— "The question at issue," said our bishop, "refers to an important right of my Church, common to all those in the province of Narbonne, which has never been subject to the Regale, and this not as a matter of privilege but by an exemption accorded to it by the Crown, and by a natural freedom and liberty as ancient as their foundations. They have enjoyed this liberty under the first and second race of kings, when this province was possessed by the Counts of Toulouse and other lords. They were annexed to the Crown with the same liberty under the reign of St. Louis, after the notable contests of investitures which troubled both the empire and the Church for more than half a century, during which the law of Regale began to be introduced into the churches of France. This pious king, who religiously observed the rights of the Church, as the historians of his life assert, preserved to the churches of Languedoc their ancient liberties on this point. They were further confirmed to them under the reign of Philip the Hardy, his son, in the general council of Lyons, held in presence of the ambassadors of

this prince, where, by a solemn decree, it was prohibited to all persons to introduce the Regale into the churches hitherto exempt from it. Philip the Bel expressly recognised and confirmed the liberty of the churches of this province by his letters patent, the original of which is in the archives of the metropolitan church of Narbonne. The Kings Charles VI., Charles VII., Louis XI., and Louis XII. have ever kept this rule in their decrees, using the Regale only in those dioceses and provinces where ancient custom had established it. This last-mentioned king, whose goodness and justice obtained for him the title of Father of the People, expressly forbade his officers interfering with the revenues of archbishoprics and bishoprics, and of other benefices in his kingdom where the law of Regale had no place, under pain of being punished for sacrilege. For three hundred years the Parliament of Paris has followed the same rule in its decrees, and all the authors who have written upon this subject (and several of these have been officers of State) have enunciated the same principles, viz.,—that the Regale does not extend over the whole kingdom, and, that among the provinces that are exempt, they mention Narbonne as holding the foremost rank. . . . If it be right and equitable to preserve to villages and communities the advantages and privileges that have been conferred upon them by successive kings, how much more just and reasonable to do so with regard to the Church? . . . I have been obliged to employ the means the Church has placed in my hands to hinder those persons who, under the plea of Regale, have attempted to dispossess several of the principal beneficed clergymen of my diocese, and in this course I do but follow the orders of the Church, received and authorized in the kingdom for four ages, in order to preserve to future generations, not only the temporal revenues of my see, but also the collation of benefices which is a right both spiritual and hierarchial. . . . Permit me, sire, to

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dispersed. They urged him to yield somewhat to circumstances, and tolerate the Regalists, rather than, by a persevering resistance, to expose himself to this desolation. But their entreaties made no impression upon him; his great age, and the bodily weakness induced by his long and dangerous illness, had not in the least abated his courage and intrepidity. "I have foreseen," he said on this occasion, "from the beginning of this business all the consequences that would follow, and I am prepared for them. I should not be surprised if I am driven from my diocese, but I have taken the resolution, come what will, to defend my Church to the end, under the conviction that my life has been spared to me for this purpose."

The more deeply our good bishop felt the loss of his archdeacon and promoteur, the more his courage rose with the occasion. He applied himself with additional energy to fill up the void which they had left. He preached regularly on Sundays and holy days, nor did the extreme heat of the season hinder him from giving lectures in his seminary several days in the week, a duty hitherto performed by his archdeacon. It was noticed, too, that from that time he practised additional austerities and devoted more time to prayer. His need of the Divine assistance and consolation was indeed great; circumstances of all kinds seemed combined to oppose and discourage him. The Court was irritated at his resistance to the declaration of the king. His best labourers in the spiritual field were in exile, and their places (the most important ones in the diocese) were filled by ecclesiastics of a very different spirit. The troubles of Jansenism were beginning to revive, and to give him fresh inquietude. Last of all, war broke out and the towns and villages of his diocese were filled with troops of lawless soldiery who committed great excesses.

A considerable number of bishops who were in Paris

during the controversy about the Regale, read with great satisfaction the ordinances of our prelate, but not one of them ventured openly to defend the course he had taken. Several other bishops of the provinces of Languedoc and Dauphiné wrote to him in terms of high praise for the courage he had displayed, but not one dared to join this venerable athlete who, single-handed, was fighting *their* battles as well as his own, in defending the Church of their country against a host of enemies; and there was good reason to believe that if he had been seconded by the bishops of Provence, Languedoc, and Dauphiné, the king would have desisted from his purpose of extending the Regale beyond the limits to which it was confined by law. Its forcible introduction into the diocese of Alet produced the greatest disorders. The titular clergy, deprived of the benefices of which they had been for many years in peaceable possession, were forced to leave the diocese to defend their cause in the Parliament of Paris. All that our good bishop could do under these distressing circumstances was to publish his ordinances against these violent and uncanonical proceedings, and declare the intruders excommunicate. His adversaries, on the other hand, urged the king to adopt severe measures and oblige him to revoke his ordinances, or else to seize his temporalities and banish him into exile. But this advice was overruled, and the king was prevailed upon to leave an old bishop, so deservedly respected, to die in peace, and to allow the question in dispute to be decided by the ordinary ecclesiastical tribunals.

When M. d'Alet heard that extreme measures were to be avoided on account of his great age, (he was then in his eightieth year,) and that he was to be allowed to die in peace, he drily remarked, "that he would much rather they would let him *live* in peace than *die* in it." "Who would have sup-

posed," he said, "that old age was so useful. It is certainly good for something since it has saved me from exile."

On the death of Clement IX., Cardinal Odescalchi was elevated to the papal chair on the 6th September, 1676, under the title of Innocent XI. The goodness of his character encouraged M. d'Alet to appeal to him on the subject of the Regale. Accordingly, he wrote a preliminary letter, M. de Pamiers did the same, and a trusty messenger conveyed the two letters to Rome. They were read to the Pope, who listened to the recital with tears in his eyes, and warmly espoused the cause of the two bishops. The messenger brought back a letter to our prelate from the Pope in terms of approval and affection. Thus encouraged, he drew up a full account of the affair of the Regale, and while engaged in this work the only remaining ecclesiastic whom he admitted to his full confidence was ordered to leave the diocese. Thus deprived of all his faithful council, our good bishop applied to his friends, the Port Royalists, to send him a confidential friend who could convey his despatch to Rome and advocate his cause there. They sent him M. de Pontchâteau, who faithfully performed this service. In his letter to the Pope, besides the matter of the Regale, M. d'Alet drew a faithful picture of the evils which then afflicted the Church of France. He dwelt especially upon the teaching of the New Casuists, describing it as a poison which was destroying numbers of souls. He alluded to the endeavours which were being made to revive the troubles of Jansenism, a name given to a pretended heresy, and which, he said, existed only in the imagination. He besought the Pope to defend the doctrines of grace, to maintain the rules of Christian morality, and to protect the rights and immunities of the Church.

M. Pontchâteau presented his credentials and delivered his packet to the Pope in a private audience, and communi-

cated, without reserve, those matters which M. d'Alet had only guardedly put in writing. The Pope spoke of our good prelate in terms of the highest esteem and consideration. He made the minutest enquires as to his age, his health, his mode of life, his pastoral labours, and the state of his diocese, and promised to read with particular attention the memoir he had sent him. He kept his word, and the brief which arrived in Alet a short time before the death of our prelate testified how thoroughly Innocent XI. approved of the course he had taken, and how much he sympathized with him in his afflictions.

The troubles of the Regale thickened around our good bishop to the last, but with undaunted spirit he employed the feeble remains of his strength in defending the rights of the Church, which he held so dear, against what he believed to be the illegal aggression of the Crown.

Although the Abbé de Foix had obtained possession of the revenues of the Deanery of Alet by a decree of Council, he had been unable to obtain canonical institution into the benefice. The ordinance of our prelate stood in the way, and it was necessary to remove this obstacle by an appeal to a superior ecclesiastical authority. An appeal was therefore carried to the Cardinal Bonzi, Archbishop of Narbonne, and Metropolitan of Alet. This prelate favoured the designs of the Court, and strongly, therefore, opposed the proceedings of M. d'Alet. In the absence of the metropolitan, judgment in favour of the abbé was given by his vicar-general in a long and offensively worded document which declared the ordinances of the Bishop of Alet contrary to the laws of the kingdom, and consequently of no effect, and enjoined the Chapter of Alet to instal the Abbé de Foix in all the rights of the deanery. When this judgment of the official of his metropolitan was read to M. d'Alet he was exceedingly grieved. "What!" said he, "shall a simple

priest presume to abrogate an episcopal ordinance which has been issued in conformity with the decree of a general council. Is not this simply an insult to the Church. To prohibit, also, a bishop from issuing similar ordinances for the future, and to publish this prohibition throughout the whole of the diocese, what is this, but a violent outrage upon episcopal authority?" "Let us pray much," said he, to the clergy of his household, "and endeavour to appease the displeasure of God who permits this violation of the laws of the Church ; and let us consider, in His holy presence, what measures we ought to take to remedy these evils." While preparing to repress the audacity of this official, and convince him of his incompetency to be a judge in this matter, and to refute the errors he had advanced in the document he had drawn up, M. d'Alet was seized with an attack of apoplexy. This occurred on the 15th of October, and was attended by the complete paralysis of the left side. On the 22nd instant he regained the use of his speech, and immediately dictated another ordinance, in which he endeavoured to shew that even the metropolitan has no authority to judge solely a case of such grave importance as the one in question, which affected the interests of the whole province, and, indeed, of the Church universal. When this was completed, he assembled in his chamber the chapter of his cathedral, communicated to them what he had drawn up, enjoining them to uphold it and to signify it to the official of Narbonne. The same day he wrote a letter with his own hand to his metropolitan complaining of the proceedings of his official. The following day he sent a copy of his new ordinance to all the bishops of the province of Languedoc, accompanied by a circular letter, praying them to unite with him in maintaining the rights and authority of the episcopate. On the 24th of October the paralysis increased, and, fearing a second and more fatal attack, he caused the Sacrament

to be administered to him privately to avoid any commotion. On the following day, feeling a little better, he believed it to be his duty to make a last effort for his Church, and wrote, for the third time, to the Pope and the king. He recommended to the former the Church he had governed for forty years, and, which he feared, judging from present circumstances, would be despoiled of its rights and liberties after his decease. He begged his holiness also to revoke the brief of Clement IX. against his Ritual as dishonouring to the holy see, and a subject of scandal to persons of weak judgment.

In his letter to the king he endeavoured to remove the displeasure with which his majesty regarded him in consequence of his resistance to the orders of the Court; he also begged that his exiled ecclesiastics might be restored to the diocese, their only offence being their fidelity to their bishop. "I am employing," he said, "the last moments of my life in examining what remains to be done before appearing at the bar of God. Jesus Christ bids us to go and find our brother when we know that a feeling of unkindness exists, before we present ourselves at the altar; and it is for this reason, that being on the point of offering to God my last sacrifice, that of my life, I feel it specially incumbent upon me to make this last effort to soften the feelings of your majesty which have for some time been indisposed towards me on account of the course I have taken in the affair of the Regale." The king was greatly affected when this letter was read to him.

While our good bishop was lying on his bed of pain, or employing the few intervals of ease which alternated with his sufferings, the Metropolitan of Alet returned from Rome, as full of zeal for the interests of the Court and the Regalists as was our good bishop for the liberties of his Church. His first act was to confirm the proceedings of his official against M. d'Alet, by an ordinance in which he declared that the

acts of our prelate in this affair of the Regale were contrary to the holy canons and the laws of the kingdom ; that they were outrageous in their character, troubling to consciences, and subversive of the order of the Church ; and enjoined the Chapter of Alet to conform to the judgment of his official under pain of excommunication.

The archbishop, being informed that our prelate was in a dying state, made all haste to have this ordinance printed during the night of the 5th of November, and despatched a messenger with it the next morning to signify it to M. d'Alet. Though lying in a state of extreme weakness and suffering, the dying prelate drew up a long and complete refutation of this ordinance of his metropolitan in the form of an appeal to the Pope. He had no sooner signed this document than he was seized with another attack, which paralyzed the whole body and took away the power of speech. But, notwithstanding this collapse of all the physical powers, the mind and judgment of the dying prelate were as strong and unclouded as when in the most robust health, and so continued to the end. Thinking only of his diocese, he gave orders to his attendants by signs which they sufficiently understood ; then, feeling very weak and exhausted, he signified his wish to receive extreme unction and the holy viaticum from the hands of the Curé of Alet. This ceremony was performed at the hour of three in the afternoon with the same solemnity as when two years previously it had been administered by the Archdeacon now in exile. The concourse of people was immense ; for the report that M. d'Alet was dying had drawn to the cathedral town a great number of persons from the surrounding villages. In vain the dying prelate tried to pronounce a few words to those present ; he could not articulate, and made signs to the curé to speak for him. His friend the Bishop of Saint Pons hastened to Alet the moment he heard that "the light of the Church" (for so

he termed this holy bishop) was about to be extinguished. The Bishop of Pamiers had arrived shortly before, and these two friends remained with him to the end, exceedingly touched to see how peacefully he waited the dissolution of the body, and how patiently he bore severe suffering, the extent of which was not suspected until the state of his body after death gave some evidence as to what those sufferings must have been which were endured so calmly and uncomplainingly. To the questions which these two friends put to him from time to time he returned the single word "submission." The nearer he approached the moment of his release the more he appeared to be absorbed in God. If he opened his eyes it was but to look upwards with an expression of such trust and calm content, that his attendants durst not interrupt the sweet communications which they saw he was receiving from the Holy Comforter. On the evening of the 27th of November, 1677, he caused a message to be sent to the Curé of Alet to come on the morrow, which would be the first Sunday in Advent, to celebrate the Holy Communion at an early hour of the morning in the bishop's chapel, and to administer to him the sacred rite afterwards, devoid of ceremony; but he suddenly became so much worse that he was quite unable to receive this new succour. On the 30th he was seized with shiverings, followed by a violent fever, which, increasing in intensity, threw him, on the 1st of December, into a kind of lethargy from which all remedies failed to arouse him. In this state he remained for five days, and on the 6th of the month a species of agony supervened which lasted until the morning of the 8th instant, when at the hour of eight he slept in peace. So passed from this mortal life this faithful servant of God, aged eighty years and twenty days, having spent thirty-nine years in the episcopate, unceasingly occupied in combating vice and error, and in defending the Truth.

The somewhat painful impression which death had left upon the countenance of the deceased prelate soon passed away and gave place to a bloom and freshness that overspread the features. It seemed as though the new life of the soul had renewed in some mysterious way the youth of the body. The marks of age were so entirely effaced that those who knew him in his later years could with difficulty recognize him in the portraits which were taken of him after death.

The body, clothed in the episcopal vestments, was exposed to view in a chamber of the bishop's residence. The whole town came to pay their last tribute of respect to the deceased, and with the same honours as if he had been canonized. Medals, chaplets, books of devotion, and handkerchiefs were brought by the people to have some virtue communicated to them through having touched the body of a saint; and if the eagerness of the crowd had not been forcibly restrained, not a vestige of the bed on which the body of the deceased prelate was laid, nor the vestments with which it was clothed would have remained. All would have been torn to shreds and carried away as relics. On the following day, the 9th of December, the body was conveyed into the cathedral church and laid before the altar. Crowds of people filled the cathedral, for the neighbouring towns had been almost emptied of their inhabitants who had flocked to Alet to take part in the funeral obsequies of their deceased bishop. Holy Communion was celebrated in the cathedral by the Bishop of Pamiers, who afterwards preached a funeral discourse for the friend he had so dearly loved and valued.

In consequence of the crowded state of the church which was filled throughout the day by the concourse of people who were continually arriving, the body, for greater security, was conveyed into the chamber of the chapter

and the door barricaded, but this precaution proved insufficient; the people would not be kept away from the object of their veneration, and the door would soon have been forced open had not the body been removed into the sacristy where several of the clergy remained with it, admitting the crowd by a few at a time to kiss the hands and feet of the deceased bishop. The office for the dead having been chanted after mid-day in the bishop's chapter, M. de Pamiers, with the clergy, accompanied the body to its last resting place in the cemetery of the church of St. Andrew of Alet, where, in accordance with the wish of the deceased, it was interred at the foot of the cross erected there. It was not without considerable difficulty that the procession could force its way through the crowd, and, in spite of all precautions taken to guard the body, it was impossible to prevent the pontifical robes that covered it from being cut and torn in pieces by the people, who carried them away as relics. Even the straw of the mattress upon which the body had lain was all removed in like manner. During the week following the interment, the concourse of people arriving in Alet was immense; night and day a continual procession might be seen moving slowly towards the cemetery to visit the grave of the good bishop, and to spend there some little time in prayer. Neither stone nor epitaph was placed over his remains, for this he had expressly forbidden in his will.

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Rest from thy loved employ ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy.

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